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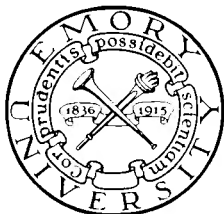
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THE MAN OF THE PERIOD.



CHAPTER I.

LANDY'S.

LIFE at a private tutor's is not generally very eventful. It certainly was not so at Mr. Landy's establishment at Barnes. The dull routine of the studies to which the young gentlemen under his care were condemned, was only varied by an occasional run with the beagles in the autumn, a row on the river, a fragrant pipe, and a game of billiards at the nearest place of accommodation for that particular mode of passing one's time, and a walk in Richmond Park for those who were fond of scenery and exercise. Mr. Landy was considered a good coach. He had established a reputation for sending men well up to their work to the universities, to civil service and army examinations, and for fitting them generally for every walk in life, which chance, inclination, or the sweet will of their parents marked out for them. He never advertised. That was low and far beneath him. His connection was good, and his house, a large one, was

always full. The young men whose minds and morals he was supposed to look after, were, many of them public-school boys, whose education, according to the Public Schools Commissioners, is always shamefully neglected, while their muscular Christianity was indisputable, and that was about all that could be said for them. The physical-force mania has increased wonderfully of late years; and though Landy did nothing to check it, he told his pupils plainly, that he could not pass them unless they gave him as much of their undivided attention as seemed fit and advisable to their growing minds. As a rule they were responsive to the appeal, because they could not be blind to their own interests. So they ground away at dead and living languages and mathematics with an energy which contrasted strangely with the listless apathy which the youth of the day think it becoming to assume on ordinary occasions. They bought light literature, however, recklessly: thinking its perusal a harmless recreation, and were great at the bookstall at the station, of which they were munificent patrons. A favourite amusement of theirs was to stare somewhat rudely at a pretty woman when they chanced to meet one; and if their ingenuity enabled them to find out a decent-looking shop-girl in any of the villages within a radius of five miles, they would rush to make absurd purchases, and talk wildly to one another in the evening about her hair and eyes, with the usual fervour of impetuous and gilded youth. In short, they were neither better nor worse than the run of gentlemen's sons; and if they were not brilliant, they were not very vicious.

In the beginning of October, a year or two ago,

Mr. Landy's establishment was somewhat reduced; two men had gone up for the Indian Civil, and, strange to say, passed. Some had matriculated at Oxford; and one had perversely lost his life on an Alp. He always was fond of climbing. He would go up an apple-tree or a sand-hill, or even a painter's ladder at the side of a house, rather than not climb at all; and at last he came to grief, and his climbing was over. There were not more than ten or a dozen at Moncombe House. Three of those who had been there longer than the others formed themselves into a clique. How is it that this sort of cliqueism will pervade the lives of the English, do what they will, or go where they like? Their names were Cook, Arden, and Viscount Bracken; the latter incorrigibly stupid, but very gentlemanly.

Some letters arrived in the evening, and one directed to Matthew Arden was opened eagerly. It was from an old pupil who had gone up to Cambridge—a nice fellow, and a general favourite. The clique were in the general reading and smoking-room, and, of course, were trying to colour ugly-looking pipes, which generally broke before the process, of dubious utility, was accomplished.

"What does Shirley say?" asked Lord Bracken, exhibiting more curiosity than he usually bestowed on any worldly matter.

"He begins with a little elegant Latin," replied Arden. "I suppose he thought he would do a theme, and changed his mind, to write a letter. He always was a lazy beggar. What does this mean? *'Hæc litteras scribebam intra sanctos Sanctissimi Johannis Collegii muros, in celeberrimâ hæc nostrâ academiâ*

Cantabrigiæ.' O, I see. It is easier to translate than I thought. He means, he is writing in the sacred precincts of St. John's College, in the celebrated college of Cambridge; and he has the impertinence to add, '*Latine minus eleganter scribere videor quam Græce*,' when he does not know much of either one or the other."

Arden went on reading the letter to himself, until the patience of those who were desirous of being his hearers was exhausted, and Bracken exclaimed, "You are very communicative, I must say."

"You shall each enjoy the felicity of reading it for yourselves," rejoined Arden. "It is full of rot. He says he has got a cause at issue with his washerwoman on the score of his linen being deficient. His bed-maker, or scout, is called a gyp, and he derives it from a Greek word signifying a vulture. He was always good at derivations. The gyp is an awful thief, and steals everything he can lay his hands on, excusing himself, when found out, by saying, he only borrows them. His last theft was a sack of coals. I say, I can't stand that; can you? I can understand a man bagging your weeds, and your potables or edibles; but a sack of coals is out of all conscience. Take the letter, Bracken, and hand me your pouch, will you?"

His juvenile lordship handed him a seal-skin pouch filled with a prepared mixture of great virtue. He was proud of telling every one how he had invented it. In it was honey-dew, cut Cavendish—these two being so much alike you could not tell one from the other—Latakia and Maryland returns. Arden filled his pipe, and handed back the pouch, which was very often put under contribution, as Bracken had more money than most young men of his age, and was very generous.

"O, I see why you wouldn't read it out," said his lordship presently, as he cast his eyes rapidly over the letter. "There's some chaff about your brother. The fellows call him Sanctus Arden, and he has gone in heavily for theological reading."

"I don't see why he shouldn't, if he likes it. A man is an ass who allows himself to be chaffed out of what he thinks is right," answered Matthew Arden, who flushed a little. "I'm not so good as I ought to be; but I don't care about hearing sacred things turned into ridicule. If a fellow wants to be funny, let him leave religion alone. What do you say, Cook?"

"It is a subject I always avoid. I'm not good at religion or politics, and I prefer leaving them to other people. If they are started, there is sure to be a row about them before the thing is over."

Bracken said nothing. It was not his custom to find his friends in ideas. He found them in tobacco, and he thought that he had done his duty after that. He gave back the letter with a dry "thank you," relighted his pipe, which had gone out, and looked straight before him, at nothing in particular, like an owl in an ivy-bush.

Arden was not well pleased at this contemptuous silence, for such he took it to be, though it was really nothing of the sort. Bracken was too lazy and incompetent to enter into an argument. He would have been bored, and he hated that; and he would infallibly have been beaten, which would have roused a latent acrimonious feeling; so he acted wisely in avoiding both.

Putting his letter from Shirley in his pocket, he walked away, whistling a tune popular at music-halls,

and droned dismally by those instruments of auricular torture, street-organs. Presently, turning round, he said, "When I show you a letter again, you may congratulate yourself."

"I have no wish to be favoured with your correspondence, if you address that remark to me," answered Cook.

"Under no circumstances would it be a matter of congratulation to me," observed Bracken. Arden whistled louder than ever, and quitted the room, in too much of a temper to speak any more to his friends. He was easily offended, and a moment after he had taken offence in this instance he was angry with himself for doing so, because he could not exactly see what had been done to offend him. He had a sincere regard for his brother, and was at all times ready to fight his battles; and he was in reality annoyed because he thought his brother's name had been regarded slightly, or his principles sneered at.

Their father was a stock- and sharebroker in the City, a member of the firm of Fulling and Arden. He was a scheming, adventurous man, of no family, and was educating his two sons, one for the church, and the other for the army. He had two daughters—Fanny and Polly—who were of a marriageable age; and his highest ambition was to marry them well, regardless of their happiness or inclination.

To a man of this sort it is unspeakable delight to hear his daughter addressed as a lady of title, and know that he is through her connected with some noble house; and he thought he should be more likely to get good men to his house by bringing his sons up to the liberal professions than by putting them into trade. He could

easily marry his girls to money, but that was of no use to him, because he had as much as he or they wanted. He was fishing for a title, but as yet he had not caught it. He continually urged his son Matthew to make grand acquaintances, and, if he could manage it, to invite them to River-side House, Teddington, where he lived. In the City they accounted Fulling and Arden very smart people, and so they were. It was much to their credit that they had made a fortune. Arden respected Fulling very much, and liked his family; but he kept them as much at a distance as he could, because he did not want an Arden to marry a Fulling; and as Mr. Fulling was animated by precisely similar ideas, the younger branches of the two families very rarely came in contact.

"Arden's hooked it off in a huff," said Tom Cook, as his friend's figure diminished by degrees and grew beautifully less.

"Let him huff," replied Viscount Bracken. "Have another pipe?" he added, tendering the inevitable pouch.

"No, thanks; not now," answered Cook.

As he spoke, something on the floor attracted his attention, and, stooping down, he picked it up. A moment's scrutiny enabled him to perceive that Arden had let fall some letters; but, instead of hastening after him, he turned to his companion, and said, "These belong to Arden. It would be great fun to read and then burn them."

"I don't think so," replied Bracken. "It is a black-guard thing to read a man's private letters."

"Is it? Well, I'll give them to him, then," answered Cook, a little abashed. "I only said so because he was so cocky about the one he showed us."

He put the letters in his pocket, not feeling inclined just then to run after Arden, and the matter escaped his memory during the evening; so that when he went to bed he still had the epistles in his possession.

The resources of Mr. Landy's establishment did not permit him to allow each of his pupils a separate bedroom. Lord Bracken and Cook slept in the same room, and made the best of the slender accommodation afforded them.

Mr. Landy excused himself by saying that it was not his fault: he could not give every one a room to himself. It was the man who built the house that was to blame; and in this remark there was some sense.

Not being in any way treated like schoolboys, Bracken and Cook could keep their light burning as long as they liked; and though smoking upstairs was not supposed to be allowed, they generally indulged in that amusement, and frequently read for an hour or more before going to sleep, or talked vicariously.

On this particular night Cook was not in a loquacious mood. Bracken addressed several questions and observations to him, receiving short answers.

"What are you doing?" at length he exclaimed.

"Reading," replied Cook.

"O! Did you give Arden his letters?"

There was a pause, at the expiration of which Cook said, "I don't mind telling you that I didn't. The fact is, I forgot all about it; and—look here, Bracken, I'm beastly sorry, but my curiosity got the better of me, and I've been reading the things. I'm not altogether so sorry as I should have been, though, because there is something about you in two of them which I think you ought to see."

"I!" cried Bracken, in a tone of voice which the devil might employ when solicited to touch holy water. "No, thank you. If you are bad enough to read a man's letters, I am not going to back you up in it."

"Perhaps I'm not right; I don't think I am," said Cook. "There may be a difference of opinion about it, however, and one does so many things one ought not to do in the course of the day, that I'll risk this."

"Rather loose morality!"

"Is it? We'll get Landy to give us a lecture on ethics to-morrow; but, in the mean time, listen to this. Don't say you won't, because I mean to read it to you; and unless you get up and go out, or put your fingers in your ears, you must hear me."

Lord Bracken again attempted a feeble remonstrance, but Cook overruled him, and with astonishment, not unmingled with amusement, he heard the following letter read:

"My dear Mat,—I am glad to hear that you think you are getting on well with your studies, and will make a good show at Chelsea when you go up for your examination. It will be a source of great consolation to me to see you take your place among gentlemen; to enable you to do which, I have, as you know, spent a considerable sum of money, and am prepared to spend a great deal more. I should not advise you to try to be too profound. Just learn enough to pull through. Learning does not help you much with women, who care more for a red coat, a captain's commission, and a nice-looking fellow,—as I am proud to say you are,—than for all the Latin, Greek, and mathematics that a man can cram into his head. You must marry a woman of title with

money some day. That is my darling wish, and you have often promised you will not disappoint me. Talking of this reminds me of what you said in your last letter about young Lord Bracken. I have made inquiries about him, and find that he will be very rich in a year's time, when he comes of age, as his fortune has been accumulating during his minority, and he has large estates in the north as well as in the south of England. He is decidedly a man to know, and you should cultivate him. See if you cannot get him over to Teddington some day, either in a boat up the river, or let the girls drive over and fetch you. That would not look well, though, as he has not been introduced. I think Bracken would just do for Tibby, who is a fine girl, and would do her best to look well and please. See to this; and if you can bring your friend to River-side House, I shall be delighted, and you can draw upon me for an extra ten pounds this quarter.

"I am, my dear Mat, your affectionate father,

"G. W. ARDEN."

When Cook finished reading this letter, Viscount Bracken could not help bursting into a loud fit of laughter.

"What do you think of that?" asked Cook. "You did not know that a trap was set for you."

"It is one which I am not likely to fall into," answered Bracken. "But I am surprised that Arden should lend himself to his father's schemes; he has always seemed such a different sort of fellow to me."

"Perhaps he does not like it, but can't help himself," said Cook. "You will not go to River-side House if he asks you, I suppose?"

"He has asked me, and I shall go just for the fun of the thing."

"Take me with you, then," cried Cook; "I shall enjoy it immensely."

"How can I take you, when it is not my place? If the man chooses to invite you, it will be another thing."

"I am not going to make-up to him for an invitation. Perhaps there is more than one sweet interesting Tibby, and I might be singled out by the dear creature."

"Are you a catch?" asked his lordship.

"I don't know. Some people might think so. My father's got some coin, which I shall have some day. Here is another letter which you ought to hear. It is from Tibby herself."

"I am ashamed of having listened to the paternal effusion; but I can't resist the temptation of hearing what Tibby has to say. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is awfully weak. Go ahead!"

Cook then read a letter from Matthew Arden's eldest sister, whose name was Fanny, but who was always called Tibby in the family circle. No one knew why. It was one of those familiar pet names of which one scarcely ever knows the origin.

"Dear old boy," began Miss Tibby,—“It is an' age since I wrote to you, and I don't know that I should have taken up the goosewing now, if the governor had not positively badgered me into it. You know how I hate letter-writing. Not that my education, in some respects, has been shamefully neglected, as you would spitefully suggest; my pothooks and hangers being very

angular and elegant; but, though I can rattle away when I am talking to any extent, I can't put my thoughts on paper without making an effort, which is work, and working is not my form, if I can shirk it. Who is this Viscount Bracken that the governor has got hold of? I have heard of nothing else for days and weeks past. The Mum took us over to Richmond and bought a heap of things a day or two ago; and I heard the old people talking together, and saying, 'Tibby must have this, and Tibby must have that.' I went out for a pull on the river with Polly yesterday, and got an awful wiggling for being red and tanned. 'What would his lordship say?' inquired the Mum. 'Bother his lordship!' replied I; and then I was accused of being indifferent to my future prospects, and ungrateful to the last degree. The fact is, I am expected to make a dead set at this friend of yours, which I am sure I sha'n't do, if he isn't nice and up to my standard, which, as you know, Mat, is rather high; and if I snub him, which it is ten to one I shall do, there will be row enough to last the old people for a month. Can't you take his lordship out rowing and half drown him, or rattle him over the stones in a trap and pitch him out, so as to postpone the awful ordeal? He will be the first lord we've ever had at River-side, and none of us will know how to treat him. The old lady will fall down and worship him, I verily believe. You remember, when we got as far as a baronet, who was a director of a City company and let the governor in for a lump, how the Mum was fit to eat him up, and would make him have such a lot of champagne that he got disagreeably tight before the evening was half out, and made an ass of himself trying to kiss me in a corner, for which I gave him a gentle reminder

with my left that he did not forget in a hurry. Please, if you can manage it, Mat dear, send me the bull-pup you've been promising me this ever so long. My cat got knocked on the head the other day, and my toy terrier's got the mange through the Mum's over-feeding it, and it's gone to a vet; so I am positively pet-less. Send the bull-pup, and drop me a line about the infant peer; and for ever oblige your loving TIBS."

"I like that," said Viscount Bracken. "She is not a bad sort of girl, I should think; though the style of writing is not quite Richardsonian. It is evident that she is not so mercenary as her father and mother. I wonder if Arden means to give her the bull-pup."

"He's a beast if he doesn't, after such a pathetic appeal," said Cook.

"I have half a mind to do so myself; only I should betray a knowledge of the letter, which wouldn't do."

"No; you must not betray me. Are you going to sleep? If so, just shy something at the candle. Don't dream of Tibby."

His lordship took up a book he had been reading, and with a dexterous throw caused it to alight upon the top of the candle, and extinguish it gracefully without a smash; then he wished his friend good night, and going to sleep, did dream of Tibby, who was unconscious of the interest which the young nobleman was beginning to take in her, even in his slumbers.

CHAPTER II.

BACHELORS' OPINIONS.

SOME very agreeable neighbours of the Ardens at Teddington were the Wiltons. There was a great deal of difference between the two families, and for more reasons than one. The Ardens did everything for show; and having money to spend, they did not hesitate to spend it to effect the end they had in view, which was to marry their children well.

Major Wilton was poor; he had lost a large sum of money through investing in the shares of a City company, and he had to regret the loss of this money all the more because it was his wife's. She allowed him to do as he liked, and the result was comparative poverty; for the loss reduced his income rather more than one-half. He had a son and a daughter. The son Edward was in the Accountant-General's office, and he lived at home; but not to sponge on his parents. His income from the War-office was not large, and after paying income-tax it looked still smaller on paper; but he made it go a long way, and paid his mother for the board and lodging which he received at home. To make his mother and sister presents he deprived himself of many comforts which he might have enjoyed, and which he found other men in his position would and did enjoy at all hazards. He had the approval of his own conscience, and his mother and sister adored him. Edina Wilton, the sister, usually called Eddie Wilton, or Miss Eddie, was a tall, handsome, dark girl, very quiet and reserved in her manner—religious, punctual

in her attendance at church, fond of visiting the poor in their homes when nobody knew it, and in favour of family prayers on Sunday evenings.

There was another inmate of Major Wilton's household, and that was a girl of French extraction, Miss Chérie St. Ange, whose father had been a French refugee and a man of fortune. Unhappily he lost his life in a generous attempt to save that of a fellow creature who had fallen into the river Thames, and perishing there without a will his fortune had been claimed by his brother, who was his heir-at-law, and who administered the estate, the daughter not obtaining a shilling. She had been well educated, and the Major being acquainted with her father, took her into his household as the companion and instructress of his child. She was not made to feel that her position was that of an inferior, but on every occasion and in every way she was treated as one of the family.

It was no wonder that every one loved Chérie St. Ange. In figure she was short and slight, her hair was fair, almost golden, her features were not very regular, but their expression was so good-natured, and her disposition so thoroughly good and happy, that she could not make an enemy. Her vivacity never failed her. She seldom deplored the loss of the fortune which her father had brought from France, and which should have been hers, though she frequently asserted that her father had spoken to her of a will, which she believed to be in existence somewhere, though the solicitors of the late M. St. Ange, who were Messrs. Peddie and Lever in Bedford-row, declared that they had searched among all the papers of the deceased gentleman, but could find no will: though, curiously enough, they ad-

mitted that they had some years before drawn up a will in which M. St. Ange left everything he had in the world to his daughter.

Nor was this an inconsiderable sum. St. Ange had foreseen coming calamity in France, and he feared that the republican principles which he professed, and which he would rather die than renounce, would entail misfortune upon him; so he transferred, while he could, all his fortune, amounting to a hundred thousand pounds, to the English funds; and when the time came for him to leave France to avoid imprisonment, and perhaps death, he fled to England, and lived comfortably, owing to his prudence and foresight. The lawyers suggested that this will had been removed by the testator and destroyed. Several theories were started by the young lady's friends to account for the destruction of the will: but the fact remained the same. The will could not be discovered; and while her uncle revelled in her fortune, she was penniless.

The kindness with which she was treated by the Wiltons compensated her for her loss, and she felt that she was regarded more as a daughter than a governess or companion, while Edina looked upon her as a sister.

In order to increase his limited income, Major Wilton reluctantly allowed his wife to take in a lodger, whose name was Golfer; oddly enough, a clerk in Peddie and Lever's office, they being, as we have said, solicitors to the late M. St. Ange.

Mr. James Golfer, at the age of thirty, was not an agreeable man. The law can turn out some very remarkable specimens of human nature, and he was one of them. He was tall and thin, with long, straight

black hair. His manner was respectful to his superiors and even cringing; but with his equals, or those he thought his equals, he could be loud and vain-glorious. His mind gave itself up to subtlety and cunning; add to which he was an invaluable process-server, and was well acquainted with all the tricks and subterfuges which seem to be inseparable from the profession of an attorney—or let us qualify the assertion and say, from the calling of a lawyer's clerk.

It seemed strange at first sight that Mr. and Mr. Wilton consented to receive a man like Golfer into their house; but the fact was, Mr. Wilton had made his acquaintance when calling upon Peddie and Lever to endeavour to establish Chérie St. Ange's rights, and he had found the fellow so uniformly civil and obliging, that when he had a couple of rooms to let, and heard that Golfer wanted to get out of town, he took him in at a guinea a week; and he crept by degrees into the family circle, nobody liking him, but no one objecting openly to him, because he was so humble, and, as the Major said more than once, "so deuced civil."

Edward Wilton did not care about Mr. Golfer: but not wishing to offend his mother's lodger—the idea of her having one rather hurt his pride—he did not let him see how much he disliked him. Golfer did not force himself upon his society. He had sense enough to see when and where he was wanted, and where he was not. He could make himself comfortable in his little sitting-room with a pipe and the abstract of a deed, which he preferred to poetry or novels. But underlying this surface of humility and satisfaction with his lot there was an under-current of craftiness and ambition, which will develop itself as our story proceeds.

We have said that the Wiltons were on friendly terms with the Ardens. The Major thought that his children should go out a little; and Mr. and Mrs. Arden were very hospitable, and gave good parties. It pleased Mr. Arden to say, as he pointed out the Major, "Old friend of mine. Cavalry officer. Fine fellow. Got medals for foreign service. One of the right sort, sir. The country will never go to the dogs so long as we have men of his stamp among us. My children and his are like brothers and sisters."

The Major could not afford to give champagne suppers, and engage a band from London; so he contented himself with a mild croquet-party on his lawn, which, like Ardens, sloped pleasantly down to the river. He had bought his house before he lost his money, and he had, fortunately, not mortgaged it in any way, so that he could live rent free, and had only to pay the many and vexatious taxes which worry the life of the householder in this expensive country. The mild croquet-party would be followed by a still milder tea or supper; sallyhuns and watercresses distinguishing the former, and cold ribs of beef or a couple of fowls being the chief feature of the latter; with mild ale from a cheap brewery, dispensed with frugality and care. But if the old military swell, as Arden called him to his wife, was mean, and shaved rather closely in trifles, he couldn't help it. It was the fault of his poverty, not his will; but the Ardens knew that. Mrs. Wilton was a lady, and the Major a gentleman "bred and born." Edina was a very different stamp of girl from Tibby, and Edward had somewhat the advantage of Mat.

If it had not been for Edward's sake, perhaps the

Major would not have been so civil to the Ardens; but he argued, that if Edward gave up lodging in town, and the concomitant delights of music-halls and theatres, and an evening now and then at some man's rooms, he must be compensated for his self-denial in some way; so he knocked-up acquaintances in the neighbourhood; and dear, good, obliging Chérie St. Ange was always an acquisition, for she never refused to play for hours together while others were dancing, and to cry forfeits, at inventing which she was very clever. If she did not get a dance the whole evening, she did not grumble. "What does it matter?" she would say; "I daresay my turn will come some day." At home she was always contented; what little money she had, she spent in judicious finery and French novels. In the pages of Xavier de Montepan, Ponson de Terrail, and, chief of all, Garborian, she found mines of consolation. It was her nature, and she could not help it. The love, adventure, and excitement with which French novels abound had charms for her beyond those of our own novelists, which, as a rule, consider character of more value than incident.

In the War-office Edward Wilton had made acquaintance with a young gentleman, whose income amounted to three hundred a-year. Of course, he spent more; and his debts had occasionally to be paid under protest by his indulgent parents, whose worldly wealth diminished after each appeal which was made upon it.

His name was Geoffray Trevellian; and he was a fair specimen of the young man of the period. Decidedly not a fool, though not actually clever, he knew how to say sharp and cutting things when he liked,

which passed current for wit. He was the possessor of a moderate share of good looks. Of course he was selfish—most young men nowadays are; he was cynical—it is the fashion to be so. In religious matters he went in for indifferentism. The great questions which are shaking society to its very foundation in religion and politics, did not extract a thought from him; or if they were honoured with a thought, he did not think them worthy of a remark. He would as soon go to church as stay away from it. As a rule, he did attend divine worship when in the country, because he could see people he knew, and they could see him. He was a capital dancer, and a good hand at that sort of small-talk which is so useful in a drawing-room. Being a man of good family, he had numerous invitations from people of position: but, though he flirted terribly, he was not in a fair way to get married, because he was on the look-out for a woman with money; and the parents of those girls who were well endowed wanted somebody better than Mr. Geoffray Trevellian.

Edward Wilton was one of those quiet amiable fellows who felt dazzled when in the presence of Trevellian, who had the knack of acquiring great influence over most young men with whom he came in contact. Wilton wanted to get him down to River-side House; but Trevellian thought it scarcely worth his while to accept the invitation.

His great friend was a Mr. Jack Easby, who lived in chambers in the Temple. Easby had been called to the bar, but he had very little money; and as literature offered him a tempting field, he neglected the law to write for papers and periodicals. He derived a considerable income from the cheap and widely-circulated

penny journals, the readers of which adored him; and with some justice he boasted that he had had millions more readers than Thackeray or Dickens, which was not a vain boast, when it is considered that the leading penny journals have a circulation of a quarter of a million of readers a week. This is a reflection which would startle Mr. Mudie and his patrons, if it has not already occurred to him.

He took Wilton to the Temple one evening, and introduced him to Easby, who was hard at work on a serial tale for a popular periodical. He threw down his pen as his friend entered, and said, "I am glad you have come. I wanted an excuse to knock-off for an hour, though the printers are waiting for copy, and are likely to wait, for that matter."

"Anything new?" asked Trevellian, after introducing his friend Wilton, whom Easby received very politely.

"Yes, a new tale, which I call 'Fashion's Victim, or the Festive Martyr.' It gives me an opportunity to lash into the vices of modern society. The Festive Martyr will be a great success, and send up Tower-Hill, which is the name of the paper on which I am engaged. By the way, did you read that great tale of mine, 'The Executioner, or the Fallen Head'? It was very appropriate, and of course historical."

"I never read more than I can help," answered Trevellian; "the daily paper is a necessary evil, but trash is an infliction."

"Thank you," said Easby. "I always remark that if you get a chance of saying a nasty thing, you don't let the opportunity slip."

"Don't accuse me of being ill-natured," returned

Trevellian, "because I don't recognise you as a great literary genius. I believe you are one, and that you will some day burst on the world like a shining light."

"Thank you once more. You need not go on; my vanity is all right now, but don't open the wound, because it is only cicatrised," replied Easby with a laugh.

Wilton regarded Easby with some curiosity. Trevellian had said, "I will take you to see a literary swell. He is not much known now, but he will be a hit some day. Writes heaps of things. You must have heard of him."

Wilton had not heard of him, but he said, "Perhaps," because he did not like to appear ignorant of the existence of such a celebrity, and he sat ready to remember and appreciate everything that fell from his lips.

Easby brought out pipes and tobacco. "Will you have beer?" he asked. They said they would; and putting on his hat, he added, "I sha'n't be a minute, but I must run and order it. My laundress has gone for the day, and we don't keep our slave machinery on the premises."

"Well, what do you think of him?" said Trevellian, as the door closed behind their host.

"I scarcely know," replied Wilton.

"He's a capital fellow."

"So I should think."

They filled their pipes, and smoked in silence, until Easby returned with a can of beer, which he placed on the table with some glasses. "I was obliged to Gany-mede it myself," he observed, "as the attendant spirit of pots and cans was sleeping the sleep of the just—in other words, I was confidentially informed that he was tight in the backyard, and would be discharged to-mor-

row morning. Pray make yourselves at home. I hope Mr. Wilton likes the beer of the country."

"Thank you, yes," answered Edward. "I am a very small drinker, and I shall, I have no doubt, enjoy one glass of your beer very much," for which piece of gratuitous information Jack Easby looked profoundly grateful.

"Have you written much?" inquired Wilton, who thought such a question incumbent upon him.

"Have I? Yes; I have written much, and been read more," replied Easby, which passed for a joke, though nobody knew why, and was laughed at accordingly.

"Where do you get your plots?" continued Wilton.

"Principally from the French," answered the genius with a smile of assurance.

"O!" said Wilton, and relapsed into silence.

"Wasn't that last book of yours a great success?" inquired Trevellian, following up the line of conversation. "That about people who take other people in to live with them."

"*Tales of my Landladies*, by an Old Lodger," cried Easby. "O, yes; that went immensely; but the joke of it was, I never lived in lodgings in my life."

"Then you don't draw your characters from nature, Mr. Easby?" hazarded Wilton.

"Yes I do, when I get the chance; but nature is not prolific of characters. There is not one man in fifty that one meets, who has any character at all. Suppose I were to put you in a book, what do you think I could make of you?"

Trevellian looked a little nettled, and Wilton, colouring up, scarcely knew how to reply; like most very young people, who know little of the world, he was very

apt to take offence; and he replied, "I don't suppose there is anything intentionally offensive in what you said, but—"

"My good sir," interrupted Easby, "how could there be? I asked you a simple question, because I was on the look-out for information. If you will kindly answer me, I shall be deeply grateful."

"I really am at a loss to give you an answer," replied Wilton, in some confusion.

"The first knowledge which a man ought to acquire is a knowledge of himself, the philosophers tell us. Take an early opportunity of opening up this new ground, Mr. Wilton, and then let me see you again," said Easby, patronisingly.

Wilton rose and put on his hat.

"Are you going?" asked Trevellian.

"Yes; you know I never stay late," he answered.

"O, I forgot, you are a good boy, and cultivate the golden rule, 'Early to bed and early to rise.' You'll be wealthy and wise some day. What line are you—South Western?"

"Yes."

"Take a cab at the top of Devereux-court," said Easby, "and it will land you for a shilling at the commencement of your iron road."

"Thank you. I can't afford cabs. I shall walk it in twenty minutes. Good-night."

"Good-night" said both the men.

"Shall I see you at my father's place to-morrow evening, Trevellian?" added Wilton, stopping short at the door, which Easby opened for him.

"I really can't promise," answered Trevellian. "If I were suburban, it might be different; but it is such an

awful bore to get back to town. Please leave it open will you?"

"I should like to make sure of you."

"So would a good many people," replied Trevellian. "I pride myself upon being difficult. If I went everywhere, I should not be thought so much of, and I should speedily degenerate into a party hack. Give my compliments to your good mother, and tell her I thank her sincerely for her invitation, and will come, wind, weather, and the other powers permitting. By the way, will it be *de rigueur*—black and white?"

"I think so. I shall wear evening dress myself and white gloves," answered Wilton.

"Gray, my dear boy, wear gray; white are a fatal mistake: and if your appearance is not eminently aristocratic, make you look like the supplementary green-grocer had in for the evening.

Edward Wilton smiled, and left the chambers, losing himself twice before he got out of the Temple; and as he went home he thought that literary men were all he had heard of them, sarcastic, disagreeable, if Easby was a fair specimen; forgetting all the while that he had laid himself open to a rebuff by talking shop, which was being just as rude to Easby as the latter would have been to him, if he had on a first introduction asked him a lot of questions about Government offices, or the amount of work required from third-class clerks.

"Who is that very brilliant individual?" asked Easby, when he was gone.

"A man in my office," answered Trevellian. "His father was in the service, and I have met the son a few times."

"And having done so, you make him your friend?"

"Not exactly. He does not dress badly, and I thought he would do to back a bill, if I wanted any one to jump up behind a bit of paper."

"I see," replied Easby. "Is the possible advantage, however, worth the immediate bother of going down to his place, and dancing with his sisters on the carpet, hearing them do bad music, and drinking wine which will make you as ill as a dog for a week afterwards?"

"I don't think it is," said Trevellian. "You cannot call me one of the men who go into society. I would not be a party hack for a thousand a year," he added, throwing himself back in his chair. "I know one man who is, his name is Fitzroy; you should meet him, Easby. There's some character in him. He's the biggest fool I ever met. He is in a West-end office, and goes out to collect accounts in lavender gloves. He will tell you he hates commerce, and shows his contempt for it by entering an acceptance in the bill-book, omitting to put the date at which it falls due; which must be very gratifying to his employer, who thinks his balance at his bankers' all right when the bill may be presented, and he will find it all wrong."

"I know the sort of man you mean; he is a regular flunky," exclaimed Easby. "He has to toady people for invitations, and when he gets them, he generally useful, punctual at dinner, to which he is only asked as a rule at the last minute, and to fill up. Your regular party hack generally gets invited in the evening. He must dance, and if he is caught in a corner doing nothing, no scowl the amiable hostess has at command will be too bad or too black for him. If he has any accomplishments, such as singing or playing, woe betide him. If

he can recite, he has to do as much work in one evening as a barrister would get a handsome fee for in one day. He must take a turn with every girl and woman in the room, and be a proficient in Lancers, Caledonians, the hop-waltz, and a cotillon if necessary. If he does not dance till his head whirls and the starch comes out of his shirt-front, and he is as tired as a dog after a good fox-hunt, he is not considered worth his supper, and ——”

“And as a rule,” supplemented Trevellian, “he is not allowed to get much supper. They have to carve and assist the girls near them, and must not stay away from the drawing-room long, as it stops the dancing or curtails it. If they have good figures, they can assist at *tableaux*, which are quite the rage now; and at five-and-thirty they are generally ruined by a bill for gloves and other things of that sort.”

“I’ll tell you when a general-utility man, the walking gentleman in the comedy of life, generally feels it,” said Easby, “and that is when he gets really spooney on a pretty girl. The girl may reciprocate, but the parents will not hear of their contracting an alliance which can be of no possible use to them. The parents laugh at them and fling their poverty at them; which is very right in a certain sort of way; for what on earth business has a man with a wife, when he has the utmost difficulty to keep himself?”

“Thank goodness I have no inclination to commit the fatal folly of matrimony.”

“Nor I,” said Easby. “My idea is, if a man can keep himself, the woman he marries should have enough to keep herself, and they should provide for the inevitable children by making mutual sacrifices.”

"I don't think I shall go to this party of Wilton's," continued Trevellian after a pause. "I will introduce him to Fitzroy, who will jump at the chance, and get as elated as a Sunday cad out for a holiday. My name is down in quite as many visiting books already as I care about."

Jack Easby had been writing for some time, and until now he had not been perceived by Trevellian, who, when he did see his preoccupation, said, "If you are busy, I will go."

"No, don't. If I did not want you, I would tell you so. I am not so weak-minded as to let a man take up my time when I am busy for the sake of seeming polite," answered Easby. "The fact is, I thought your remarks so worthy of reproduction, that I took them down in shorthand. You don't drink your beer," he added; "would you like some soda and brandy? I have some in the cupboard."

"I think it would be more agreeable," replied Trevellian, who had made many wry faces over what Easby had jocularly called the "beer of the country."

"I don't believe in soda myself," continued Easby. "In nine cases out of ten soda-water so called is merely water saturated with carbonic acid gas. The British Pharmacopœia requires soda-water to contain fifteen grains of soda to the bottle. Don't you wish you may get it? There is humbug in everything nowadays. I think I shall become a novelist, and believe in nothing except my power for turning out a certain amount of copy in a given time, to entrance the minds of millions."

"It is just as well as not, to have a good opinion of yourself," said Trevellian.

"Yes. It is consolatory to be in the frame of mind

you point out, when one cannot have a good opinion of one's friends."

"Or when your friends have not one of you," rejoined Trevellian, who was not deficient in a certain smartness of repartee.

"I suppose this man Wilton has sisters," remarked Easby, adroitly changing the subject.

"He has told me of one."

"Ah! that is the bait generally with those men who ask one to their places. They say, 'We have some nice girls,' or 'My sisters, you know, will ask a friend or two, and we can get up a carpet-dance.'"

"It is an awful bore to dance with and be civil to women one does not care a straw about," observed Trevellian.

"So it is. Do you know, I have established a standard of my own about beauty: and when I describe a lovely girl without spot and without blemish, in one of my sensation tales for the Tower-Hill, I can enumerate on my fingers' ends the points which a woman ought to possess?"

"What are they?"

"To begin with, there are three white things a woman ought to have—skin, teeth, and hands; three dark—eyes, eyebrows, and eyelashes; three red—lips, cheeks, and nails; three long—the body, hair, and hands; three short—the teeth, ears, and feet; three broad—the chest, forehead, and space between the eyes. Give a woman these excellences, and you may call her a Venus without much fear of contradiction from a man of any taste."

"You won't find all those things, my dear fellow, at least not in London, because ladies think it fashionable

and proper to regard delicacy in its physical sense of weakness an essential element of beauty. Don't girls go in for paleness about the face and tenuity of figure? they laugh at health, and lace tight; and a woman who practises tight-lacing must be unwholesome, whatever may be the regularity of her features or the symmetry of her body. I call all the white alabaster-looking women, who stick on paint in daubs, unwholesome, and give them a wide berth at half the parties and balls one goes to. One cannot help being a wallflower; for who can dance with the insipid and sometimes positively repulsive girls who are trotted out to annoy single men? I hate an unwholesome woman; and all who trifle with nature must be so."

"I think you're right," answered Easby. "And now, old boy, have one more pipe, and let me go on with the 'Festive Martyr.' Society expects its 'Martyr' every week, and I must not disappoint a craving public of its weekly bliss."

"I won't smoke any more, thanks," replied Trevelian. "If you won't come out, I shall take a cab to the Alhambra for an hour, and then go home to bed. Good night! Don't be too hard on the 'Festive Martyr.'"

"He's up to his eyes in trouble; for he's just proposed to two girls at the same time; and his first wife turns up, and proves him to be desirous of committing bigamy; the sheriff's officers are waiting at the door to take him to Whitecross-street, and the brother of a girl he has seduced is in the passage vowing vengeance, and brandishes a big stick; while his landlady wants her little bill; and his best friend has just run away with his sister."

Trevellian laughed, saying, "I wish him well out of it."

CHAPTER III.

SUBURBAN SOCIETY.

MR. ARDEN left the arrangement of his parties entirely to his wife, and she, poor creature, having no taste whatever of her own, left everything to a man in London well known for the sort of thing, who contracted for a certain sum to decorate rooms, provide flowers, send down a band, find servants, and feed a certain number at supper, as well as refresh them at intermediate stages.

The man's taste was perhaps exceptionally good, or he was lucky in his selection of assistants; however that might be, his parties—he called them his—were always a success.

Mrs. Arden had received a letter from her son to this effect:

“My dear Mother,—I write to you because the matter contained in my brief letter concerns you as much as my father, though he wrote to me last. I should have written before, but I mislaid or lost the Governor's letter and Tibby's, which were eventually found under my bed by the servant. Lord Bracken has kindly consented to come and spend a few days with us whenever you send him a formal invitation through me. Tell the Governor that I have earned what he promised me. Also tell Tibby that I can't get a bull-pup anywhere; but Bracken says he has a splendid breed of brindled bulls at his place, and will send for one expressly for her, as I happened to mention her

wish before him. Write soon, and get up something jolly for us when we come—something, I mean, a cut above a carpet-dance, and cake, and negus. Bracken is a very quiet fellow here; but he knows how things ought to be done.—Yours affectionately, M. ARDEN.”

Mrs. Arden thought, that as *tableaux vivants* were very popular in the gay world, it would not be a bad idea to get up some at River-side House; and she applied to all her friends for classical subjects. The ignorance of those to whom her application was made nearly drove her to the verge of despair, and she had recourse, as usual, at last, to her general furnisher Mr. Fixham, who had come down to settle the number at supper, and commence clearing-out the drawing and other rooms which would be required for the party.

We must state that Mr. Fixham was a man of education, or at least a man who had acquired a smattering and superficiality which passed current for the possession of education. He may not have known the use of certain words employed by him, but he used them judiciously, as certain people do Latin quotations or French—Latin preferably, because it is more like English and easier to pronounce, the only danger being a false quantity; whereas French must be pronounced. *Verbum sap.* was a favourite phrase of Mr. Fixham’s, who knew its meaning; but had you asked him to go on with *sap.* and give it you in full, and afterwards decline it, he would have been at fault. Perhaps he would have acted wisely, and declined it altogether.

Fixham entered Mrs. Arden’s drawing-room hat in hand, and bowed, according to his custom. “I have received your letter, madam,” he said, “and I now

have the honour to wait on you. Flowers, waiters, bands, as usual. Supper for forty-five. Have I interpreted your wishes aright?"

"You have, Mr. Fixham," replied Mrs. Arden. "But there is one little difficulty out of which you must try to help me. I am told that *tableaux* are the rage in good society now, and I want to group some *tableaux*. Will you tell me how it is to be done?"

"*Verbum sap.*, madam," promptly returned Mr. Fixham. "It was only last week that I was applied to by the Countess of Carthampton, on the very same business. Have you got your ladies and gentlemen willing to act? but it don't matter. You can get them as a matter of course. It's subjects you want. Every one wants subjects."

"Exactly."

"Very well. Take, to start with, one of Moore's fantasies—Azim's Vision. It sounds well, and is very pretty, if not strictly classical. Azim dreaming, with a lot of light over him, beholds Zelica, whom he loves. The dress and the light go for everything."

"That's one," said Mrs. Arden, making a note of it. "You must get the costumes, Mr. Fixham, and place the actors at the rehearsals."

"Certainly, madam. *Verbum sap.* Now, second. Say Hermione, from the 'Winter's Tale,' that will take six characters. The injured queen is a fine part. Third, 'Beggars' Opera;' Polly, Lucy, Captain Macheath: 'How happy could I be with either' This is always a hit, because of the looseness of the characters in the original. 'Romeo and Juliet' is always a stock piece or set-scene. 'Joan of Arc' is not bad; you have the Maid of Orleans, the confessor, and others.

Lady Jane Grey preparing for execution, is liked, though it is very sad; the set makes up well, though, with a good pose and a property axe. Then there is 'Britomart disarming,' from Spenser's 'Fairv Queen,' and the 'Death of Hinda,' from 'Lalla Rookh,' and the 'Eve of St. Bartholomew,' and 'Paradise and the Peri,' 'Angel and Peri,'—you know, madam; very fine set this. If you will leave it all to me, I will coach-up your team in a fortnight."

"But we have only a week," said Mrs. Arden in alarm.

"Very well. It shall be done in six days," answered the accommodating Mr. Fixham, who was as good as his word, and got-up the *tableaux* in a way that reflected equal credit upon him and the performers.

The Wilton party were of course invited, and Edward was told that he might bring any nice young man he knew. So he repeated his invitation to Geoffrey Trevellian—his first not having been accepted; and as Wilton very obligingly put his name to a bill for Trevellian the same day, the latter, with equal good nature, agreed to go to Teddington, though he bewailed his hard fate, and made himself out a victim to all who knew him.

He came down early in the afternoon with Edward Wilton, and dined at his house, being regarded by Miss Edina with some curiosity, she having heard a great deal of him from her brother,—and sisters always get interested in their brothers' friends.

Trevellian sat by her side in the drawing-room before dinner, and they chatted together, and Edina soon told him she thought he was a great quiz.

"It is very hard," he answered; "people always say I am a quiz, and goodness only knows why. I admit I

am observant, and I like to see how a lady is dressed. Whether her boots are visible beneath her gown; whether her gown is short or tucked up, and how far she will allow herself to be *décolletée* out of doors. It may be a matter of the most perfect indifference to most men, whether a lady, whom they meet casually, rolls or crimps her hair. It is not so to me. I am in favour of the golden haystack, and the miniature bonnet, or the apology for a hat, which is of 'Alpine' shape. Petticoats, parasols, and head-dresses, all receive my attention."

"What **do** you think of me, Mr. Trevellian, if it is fair for me to ask?" said Miss Eddie.

"I think you are exceptionally charming, Miss Wilton," he answered, looking almost immediately in an opposite direction.

"That reply quite bears out the estimate I——"

She paused abruptly, and seeing that he looked inquiringly at her, she added, "Pray excuse me, I am becoming very rude; but the fact is, I have heard my brother speak of you so often lately, that I have formed an estimate of you solely from what he has said, and I feel that I ought not to have told you, because you will want to know what the estimate is: will you not?"

"I must confess to a slight curiosity," he replied.

"All I can tell you is, that I pictured you to myself a young man of the period: we won't say gentleman. *Cela va sans dire.*"

"Thank you very much," answered Trevellian. "You must not stop there," he added; "because I want a definition of that phrase, 'young man of the period;' who is he, and what is he, and where is he to be found?"

"O, he is ubiquitous, I am sorry to say. O, dear. There, I have again said something I ought not to have said. I wish you would not cross-question and press me so, Mr. Trevellian," said Miss Eddie, almost inclined to cry.

She had been betrayed into remarks and observations which she meant to have kept to herself, as many girls are who do not go out much, and are rather spooney. Miss Eddie was not an outrageously glaring flirt; but still she liked to flirt, and she was the more dangerous because she did not care what sort of a man it was she flirted with. She would flirt with any man, and had no discrimination, or shall we say no mercy?

"Evidently, if I understand you rightly," Trevellian said, "you have found something very objectionable about the average young man of the day. May I ask what it is?"

"His besetting sin is a love of self. I am going to be candid with you," replied Miss Eddie with a smile. "It is apparent in every act of his life, and betrays him into luxurious indulgences, incompatible with a proper Spartan sort of code."

"That sounds very well," answered Trevellian. "But I cannot agree with you that it is the highest virtue to live for others. A man owes something to himself."

"The man I am describing owes more to his tailor," replied Miss Eddie, laughing.

"You would have a man study economy, wear a coat till its appearance is decidedly against its owner, and give up cigars, theatres, and other amusements, in order that he may pay the premium on his life assurance, save something every quarter, or send an occasional ten-pound note to some poor relative."

“Certainly.”

“Well, the young man of the present day won’t do that, and I don’t blame him. I like to glide along the river of life quietly; and I go upon the principle of never vexing myself about what I can’t help, and never bothering myself about what I can help. In short, I take things very much as they come, and find the good and the bad of this world pretty equally mingled together.”

Miss Wilton saw Chérie St. Ange enter the room, and she made way for her on the sofa. Trevellian was introduced, and thought her very pretty. Her conversation confirmed the good impression she made upon him, and Miss Eddie was neglected for the fascinating French girl.

After dinner Edward Wilton took his friend into a little smoking-room, which was sacred to his books, pipes, and other household treasures, saying, “We are not due just yet at River-side, and have not far to go when we start; so I propose just one pipe; or would you prefer a cigar?”

“Thank you,” answered Trevellian, taking a cigar which was offered him, and adding, when he had lighted it, “That is a pretty girl—Miss St. Ange, I mean.”

“Is she not?” replied Wilton. “Every one likes her, but she never gets an offer. She is so poor, and entirely dependent on us.”

“Indeed,” ejaculated Trevellian, who could not help thinking that she would be very precious to many men without a farthing, although he openly professed the doctrine that a wife who had no fortune but her face and amiable disposition was a burden too intolerable to be dreamt of by a clever man.

A fly took the ladies, when the time came, to River-

side, the Major walking with Trevellian and his son. They found the house brilliantly lighted up from top to bottom, and the strains of music were already stealing out upon the night. Matthew Arden received them, and introduced his friend Lord Bracken. They had only arrived that afternoon from Mr. Landy's; and Bracken had not as yet had much opportunity of speaking to or observing Miss Tibby, who was busy in various ways, there always being so much to superintend and see to when one gives a party.

The tableaux, in which some intimate friends of the Ardens took part, and in which Tibby shone resplendent, commenced the entertainment, and were deservedly applauded. Mr. Fixham had brought down some printed programmes, so that every one might understand the groups and combinations, which were materially assisted by the lime-light.

Somehow or other, Lord Bracken got mixed up with the Wilton party, and sat during the tableaux between Miss Eddie and Chérie St. Ange. To the latter he paid considerable attention, much to the disgust of Mrs. Arden, who was boiling with impatience to separate him from "that set," as she called her dear friends the Wiltons.

Seizing her husband by the arm, she drew him into a corner, and said, in a low voice, "I think you might have managed things better than to have allowed his lordship to get in with the Wiltons. Look how he is wedged between the two girls. I do wish they would not bring that French doll out with them. She is just stupidly pretty enough to make the men go after her. He ought to have been kept away. It does not give poor Tibby a chance."

"I left all that to you, my dear," answered Mr. Arden. "I have been downstairs, giving out the wine to Fixham."

"Do, for goodness' sake, go and get his lordship out of the trap that is laid for him. I can see through it all. Mrs. Wilton ought to be ashamed of herself."

"So she ought," said Mr. Arden, who never contradicted his wife when he saw that she was put out by any untoward circumstance. "Don't worry, my dear. I'll go and see to his lordship. These tableaux will be over soon, and dancing will give Tibby a chance."

Mrs. Arden smiled at the pleasing prospect, and rushed off to another part of the room to welcome some new arrivals.

As for Bracken, he was unconscious of the emotions he had roused in the breast of his hostess, and, taking a liking to Chérie St. Ange, he talked to her and Miss Wilton in as familiar a manner as if he had known them a long time. They spoke about Paris; and Bracken said to Miss St. Ange, "Of course, you like Paris, and often go there?"

"No, indeed," she answered with a sigh. "I was so young when I left, that I do not remember it at all; and though I wish to go there, I cannot, because I am poor and dependent. Have they not told you that I am Miss Wilton's governess and companion?"

"No, I was not aware of it," said Bracken, in some confusion.

"Some one generally informs any one of it to whom I happen to be talking," continued Chérie, with a slight tinge of bitterness in her voice. "Not that I care; only I often think how nice it would be to be rich, and one's own mistress, and go about just when and where and how one likes."

"Yes, it must be very nice," said Bracken.

"Are you rich? Can you do all this?" inquired Chérie St. Ange, with much simplicity.

"I shall be rich when I am of age," he answered smiling. "At present I am reading for the army, and cannot call myself my own master."

The tableaux were now over, and Mr. Arden seized Lord Bracken before he could extricate himself from the network of chairs and offer his arm to Chérie, which he intended to do, for a promenade.

"Well, my lord," cried Mr. Arden, "what do you think of our little effort to amuse you, eh? Very well done. So I think. My eldest girl made a very good Lady Jane Grey, I thought. Quite touching to see her neck bared to the executioner, wasn't it? Come this way, my lord. I want your opinion about some camellias in the conservatory."

Turning to Miss St. Ange, Bracken said, "We shall meet again during the evening."

"I hope so," she answered; for she had been much impressed with his handsome face and gentlemanly demeanour, and also by the interest which she saw that he took in her when he heard that she was poor and dependent. The society of a girl like Chérie St. Ange is generally more acceptable to a man than that of a profound young lady, who has a decided idea about things in general, and can argue the point, if you happen to make a remark which does not coincide with her opinions.

Mrs. Arden had gone into the room in which the ladies dressed who formed the tableaux, and, taking her daughter by the arm, whispered in her ear, "Make haste, my dear: you will spoil everything if you dawdle."

"O, ma, don't pinch so; you'll make me black and blue," remonstrated Miss Tibby, drawing her arm away from the maternal grip, which was more tenacious than comfortable.

When she had arranged her hair, and "touched herself up a bit," as she expressed it, she was led into the drawing-room, and guided skilfully up to the place where Mr. Arden had, of course unconsciously, led the, as they thought, unsuspecting young nobleman.

"O, here you are," said Mrs. Arden, addressing her husband, "and Lord Bracken too. I am very glad you are paying his lordship some little attention. He seemed dreadfully dull and bored a little while ago."

"Not at all," said his lordship.

"O, I know," answered Mrs. Arden, with a shrewd look. "Your politeness will not let you say so, but I could see that the governess was a bore, and Miss Wilton not much better; they are not the sort of people your lordship has been accustomed to meet; but the Major—what regiment was he in, dear?"

"Eleventh Hussars, Prince Albert's own," said Mr. Arden.

"Ah! exactly; fine old gentleman. Well, as I was saying, Major Wilton is an old friend of ours, and really, in the country, secluded as we are, it is not easy to fill one's rooms if one is too particular."

"I can quite understand that," replied Bracken.

"Now my daughter Fanny—my eldest girl—Lord Bracken," continued Mrs. Arden, "is very anxious to know what you thought of her impersonations this evening?"

"I thought them extremely creditable in every

way. I have not been so much interested for a long time."

"I am delighted to hear you say so. It was all the dear child's own idea. She conceived and executed it, and has worked terribly hard to get the right costumes and drill her little company, if I may be allowed the expression."

Miss Tibby looked at her mamma reproachfully, as much as to say, "Why are you telling so many useless falsehoods, which will probably entail a number more upon me, in order to sustain yours?"

"I was going to show Lord Bracken the camellias in the conservatory," exclaimed Mr. Arden. "But I have just thought of a little matter that requires my attention. Domestic details, you know, my lord, must sometimes be seen to by the master of the house, or everything goes wrong; and if you will have the good nature to excuse me, I will hand you over to Miss Fanny, who will do the honours of the conservatory in my place."

Bracken bowed, and offered his arm to Miss Arden, who expressed her willingness to guide him over the conservatory. Mr. and Mrs. Arden saw them walk away together, and their eyes sparkled with delight and gratified pride.

"That's management," exclaimed Mrs. Arden. "The idea of Mrs. Wilton thinking she was going to cut Tibby out, and make her stick of a girl monopolise the lion of the room. No, no; I have some tact, and flatter myself that I know how to manœuvre as well as most mothers with marriageable daughters."

"Quite right, my dear. Always look to the main chance," said Mr. Arden.

When Lord Bracken saw Miss Arden, he remembered the letters which Tom Cook had picked up, and which they had read, enjoying the contents immensely. It is probable that if it had not been for those letters, Bracken would not have accepted Arden's invitation to visit his people at the River-side House. Miss Arden's letter made him wish to see her and talk to her; for he had an under-current of fun in his composition and a keen appreciation of the ludicrous, which he thought would be gratified at Teddington.

As he walked away with her on his arm, he felt inclined to smile; and so occupied was he with his own thoughts, that he did not speak to his fair companion, who was never silent long together.

"This is the conservatory," she said. "Are you fond of flowers?"

"Very; but your tastes run, I think, in a different direction," answered Bracken.

"How do you know?" she demanded sharply.

"Your brother has told me about your fondness for bull-pups, Miss Arden."

"It would be more to his credit to keep his promise and buy me one," she answered.

"He intends to do so. Indeed, he has commissioned me to get him one for you. I have a breed at one of my places in the country. Your brother said, 'Tibby will break her heart if she doesn't get a bull-pup.'"

"He said that, did he? I'll give it him for that when I see him!" exclaimed Tibby, her eyes flashing dangerously.

"What harm has he done?"

"He has dared to tell you that I am called by an

absurd name. How can I help it? I know there is neither sense nor meaning in Tibby; but they will call me Tibby, and it is annoying that you should know it."

"Why, may I ask?" inquired his lordship, much amused.

"O, I don't know. If you go on questioning me, I shall say something disagreeable; for I'm very impetuous, and I must say it. It is just like me, I always say what I think, and offend everybody. I have been civil to you because I'm obliged to be. All this fuss and bother is for you. I've had to learn all those positions in the *tableaux* till I ached again all over, just because you were coming, and—and I hate you for it. There; it's all out now. I've said what I had in my mind, and I suppose you'll go and tell mamma, and I sha'n't hear the end of it for a month to come. Heigh-o! I wish I was dead, I do," concluded Miss Tibby, sitting down on the edge of a box containing an orange-tree, regardless of the injury it might do her white muslin.

Lord Bracken was much amused at this outburst of temper, which he had not expected. Presently she extended her hand and said, "Will you forgive me?"

"What for?" he asked.

"My stupidity just now. The worst of me is, I can't hold my tongue; and I pity the poor man when I get a husband, for he will lead an awful life sometimes."

"I have nothing to forgive," answered Bracken. "I find you highly original, and anything of that sort is so rare amongst girls of the present day, that it is quite refreshing. But I am sorry to hear that you should have made all those preparations for me."

"I!" repeated Miss Tibby scornfully. "I didn't do it. I would not have gone down to the bottom of the garden to get a glass of Thames water for the richest lord in England. I had nothing to do with it. It was the old people."

"What was their object?"

"Can't you guess? If you can't, I am sorry for your powers of perception."

"A wish to settle their eldest daughter comfortably in life?" he suggested, with a slight tinge of sarcasm.

Miss Tibby nodded her head violently.

"They may make themselves perfectly easy on that score," he continued. "I don't wish to be in the slightest degree rude to you, Miss Arden, but I can assure you that I am not a marrying man; and though I am perfectly conscious of your charms, it is impossible that they should excite in me any feeling stronger than that of the warmest admiration."

"Then you are not going to make up to me," cried Miss Tibby delightedly. "That is capital. I was so awfully afraid that I should be obliged to marry a man I don't like. I mean, I like you as a brother; but I can't tell you all my secrets. I have seen some one though, who, if he only had the courage to tell me what he thinks of me, might receive a pat on the back. You have taken a great weight off my mind, and I don't mind confessing now that I had determined to be as rude and disagreeable as I could. I know you will forgive me, and we shall be excellent friends; you may even call me Tibby if you like."

"Thank you for that great privilege," said Bracken.

Suddenly they were disturbed by loud cries, which proceeded from the drawing-room ; and, wondering what was the matter, they made their way out of the conservatory with as much speed as they conveniently could.

CHAPTER IV.

CHÉRIE ST. ANGE.

THE screaming increased as they went along, and a bright glare, accompanied by a thick smoke, made their hearts beat quicker as it gave them the idea of fire.

Leaving Miss Arden, Lord Bracken hurried on to see what was the matter, and if he could be of any service. He arrived too late, for all he saw through the smoke and the crowd, was a man, who with coolness, intrepidity, and dexterity, had enveloped a woman, whose dress had caught fire, in a large curtain which he had torn down for the purpose.

“Who is she? Is she much hurt? Bravely done!” and other questions and remarks arose on all sides.

Presently the crowd made way, and through a living lane a man bore a senseless burden, still wrapped in the drapery, and, amidst a dead silence, carried it upstairs.

It was with some difficulty that Lord Bracken could make out what had happened ; but he succeeded at length in ascertaining that Chérie St. Ange had gone too near an unprotected grate, and that her dress had caught fire. Every one looked on amazed and stupefied, while the poor girl screamed terribly. The ladies

added their screams to hers. All at once, Trevellian, who entered the room accidentally, beheld what was taking place, and, acting with great presence of mind, comprehending all in an instant, averted an awful tragedy by tearing down a curtain and extinguishing the flames.

It was not for some time that the anxious guests of Mr. and Mrs. Arden were able to know whether she was hurt or not ; but at length the welcome intelligence came that the doctor had arrived, and that he had declared Miss St. Ange not to be at all burnt. She was in imminent danger : but Mr. Trevellian had saved her before the flames could do her any injury. She was much frightened and shocked ; but a night's rest would remedy all that.

This happy intelligence restored the spirits of all, which had begun to droop, and the festivity and amusements of the evening went on as smoothly as before they were suddenly interrupted.

Geoffray Trevellian was the hero of the hour, and the eyes of all the ladies were turned admiringly upon him, the more so as he had burnt his hand in rescuing Miss St. Ange ; and as it had been wrapped in a poultice, he wore it in a sling made out of a black silk handkerchief.

Those gentlemen who had looked on at the burning girl as they might have regarded any other entertainment, now seemed ashamed of their cowardice, and one and all asserted that they would have done precisely what Trevellian had done, if he had not anticipated them. On hearing which Miss Eddie Wilton said, "She had a good mind to set her own dress on fire, just to see if they would be as good as their word."

Trevellian experienced a good deal of pain from his hurt; but he had stoicism sufficient not to betray his suffering. Edina Wilton magnified him into a hero; and when she came down from the room in which Miss St. Ange had been placed, she sought out Trevellian, who was leaning against a wall, watching the dancers and talking to Edward Wilton, who, though courageous, had wanted that presence of mind which had enabled Trevellian to save the life of Chérie St. Ange. He saw the accident from the commencement, yet he had not moved, he had scarcely breathed in fact, until all was over.

"I must compliment you very highly, Mr. Trevellian," said Miss Eddie, "upon your heroic conduct. Chérie tells me to say that she can never sufficiently thank you for your noble behaviour."

"I am very happy and fortunate in being so near at hand," he replied; "and, after all, I only did what any one else would have done. May I ask you one thing, though? Is helping any one in distress characteristic of a young man of the day?"

"I did not think so until now."

"You admit, then, that we have some redeeming qualities."

"I cannot help doing so."

"Are you convinced against your will?" he said.

"O, no! I always try to think as well as I can of every one," answered Edina, blushing.

They were now joined by the Major, who was profuse in his gratitude.

"Miss St. Ange is not a child of mine," he said, "but I love her as if she were; and in saving her from the most horrible of all deaths, you have done me an

everlasting service. Thank you, sir. I am proud to know you. I hope you will look upon my house as your home; and whenever you are this way, there is always a knife and fork for you."

Trevellian expressed his sense of obligation, and promised not to forget that he was in future to be on the Major's list of friends. The party was kept up for a considerable time, and Mr. Arden, in order to do everything in that princely style for which he wished to be famous, sent all his guests who lived in London, back by special train at four o'clock in the morning.

Although nobody had invited him, Mr. James Golfer, who lodged at Major Wilton's, had managed to be present. He had an uncomfortable knack of introducing himself at places where he was not wanted, and nobody liked to rebuke him or say anything at all harsh to him, because he was so uniformly quiet and submissive. He did not dance, nor did he mingle with the company; he affected retired corners, and listened to the music, bobbing his head up and down as if trying to keep time to the fascinating melody.

Golfer saw the accident which befell Chérie St. Ange, and his cheek went deadly pale, until Trevellian dashed forward magnificently and put out the flames and then his pale face grew brighter, and his usual complacent smile sat on his thin lips once more.

"If she had died!" he muttered.

Mr. James Golfer quitted the scene of festivity earlier than most of the guests. He was in bed at one, and sound asleep at half-past, which was necessary, as he had to be at the office in Bedford-row at half-past nine every morning. Punctual as a clock was Mr. Golfer, and frequently he had the office to himself for

half an hour, as the other clerks were not so fond of turning out early, and Messrs. Peddie and Lever never made their appearance before ten.

Like a busy bee, Mr. Golfer improved each shining hour; and Peddie and Lever might have seen him, when at the office early and alone, turning over old papers, and routing about in cupboards and drawers full of discoloured moth-eaten documents tied with red tape, and reading everything he could come across in the shape of parchment, with the avidity of an historian looking over precious records in a public office, or at the house of a private collector of papers of historic value.

On the morning after the ball at Mr. Arden's, Golfer arrived rather earlier than usual at the office, and the clock had not long struck nine when the old house-keeper let him in. He gave her a nod, and passed in to the private rooms, where Peddie and Lever and the Chancery clerks sat and did their daily work. He had a safe of his own, and kept the key of it, in which he placed papers of a valuable or private nature confided to his care; and this he proceeded to open, looking around him carefully the while, as if to see that no one was observing him.

Hidden away in a remote corner of the safe, under a pile of superincumbent deeds and documents, was a bundle of papers carefully tied up. This he placed on his desk and looked at affectionately. The topmost paper was indorsed "Re St. Ange. Instructions for drawing Will;" and initialed "E. W. P.," which clearly meant Edward William Peddie. Assuring himself that the papers were safe, and in the same condition in which he had left them, Mr. Golfer put them back again, locked up the safe, and, leaning his head on his hands,

began to ruminate. Occasionally he allowed a few words to escape him, which would have given any one who happened to be listening a clue to his secret thoughts.

"These documents ought to be of value to me," he muttered. "I must be careful. One false step will ruin everything. Wait, wait; the time will come."

When Mr. Peddie arrived, at a quarter past ten, he found Mr. Golfer still dreaming; but he quickly awoke to the reality of his daily life, and was once more the cool and collected Golfer of the common-law department of Peddie and Lever's. Peddie attended to the common-law business of the firm, and Mr. Lever did the chancery work, observing privately and confidentially to his friends that it was "so much more respectable; and if he had his way, he'd kick all the common law out, and have nothing but equity."

"Golfer," exclaimed Mr. Peddie, "what have you got to do this morning?"

"Nothing very particular, sir," replied Mr. Golfer. "It is time to call at Chitty's for the pleas in that running-down case of *Driver v. Tandem*. There is Messiter's application for release in bankruptcy at twelve."

"Whose court?"

"Mr. Commissioner Bacon."

"That is all right. We shall get Messiter out, if he comes up before Bacon. What next?"

"There's that action for slander. Two widow women, lodging-house keepers in Guildford-street, Russell-square, sir; *Shrewkins v. Screwkins*. Counsel ought to be instructed on behalf of our client *Shrewkins*."

"Very well. Send the brief to Spouter, and mark

it eight guineas. Arrange a consultation before sittings after term. We shall get it on at Guildhall. Anything else ?”

“There’s the assault case—Herr Sticktoom, the German jeweller in Hatton Garden, and the police. What’s to be done in that ? The commissioners seem inclined to fight the case, and, of course, the defendants, Sergeants Swearhard and Perjurer, won’t hang back at trifles.”

“Write Herr Sticktoom, and ask for further instructions ; and when you go out, I want you to serve a writ at the War-office.”

“The War-office ?” repeated Mr. Golfer, with curiosity depicted on his countenance.

“Yes. You’ve been there before. Our clients, Smally and Pegtop, the tailors, have placed the matter in our hands. The debt is one hundred and ten pounds, including costs up to the present time. Three letters have received no answer. Serve him.”

“You have not told me the name yet, sir,” said Mr. Golfer.

“Haven’t I ?” replied Mr. Peddie. “Here it is on this piece of paper, which also contains the particulars of demand. ‘Geoffray Trevellian, Accountant General’s Office.’ That’s it.”

A peculiar smile flitted across Golfer’s face as he heard this name mentioned ; but Mr. Peddie did not observe it. He had given his instructions to his common-law clerk, and he went into his private room to read his letters.

“All works well,” said Mr. Golfer, as he rose, put on his hat and coat, and prepared to leave the office. But before he did so, he once more opened the safe, and

brought out a green-coloured book, with **JAMES GOLFER, Esquire**, written in large letters on the back. This was a banker's pass-book, and Mr. Golfer, turning over the leaves, came to the last page written upon, and saw to his satisfaction, that he had standing to his credit at the Union Bank of London seven hundred and fifty-five pounds, eight shillings, and sixpence. He put this back and locked up the safe again, saying to himself, as he left the office, "How I have scraped and saved and worked to get that little heap of money together! If I'd done what other men do, I shouldn't have been worth a penny. I don't smoke, unless it is with some one else's tobacco. I don't drink, unless some one gives it me. I travel third-class, and have my coats turned, and get my hair cut for two-pence, and scrape and scrape till people call me mean, and only excuse me on account of my poverty. A lawyer's clerk is not supposed to be extravagant. If they knew that I had seven hundred pounds at my bankers', every one I know would come round me like a flock of sheep or a hive of bees, and call me 'my dear Golfer,' and propose various tempting speculations; but they would not have me. When the time comes I know what to do with my small capital. I'll have my revenge on the world some day." He finished his meditation with a sort of porcine grunt, and walked quickly, for the morning was cold, in the direction of Pall Mall.

"It's pleasanter to be humble and slow, and know you're independent," he went on, pursuing his train of thought, "than to be up in the stirrups, and be able to have credit. Why, the very shopman, who bows to the ground as you enter his shop, and calls you 'sir,' with abject humility, will be the first to lock you up in

Whitecross-street, if you don't pay when he sends in his little bill. I give six-and-six for my hats and pay cash. They last me a year, with an occasional brush-up: twenty-three and six at the West-end could not answer my purpose better. I saw Trevellian last night better dressed than me, but he hasn't paid for a single thing he had on. Can he sleep better at night than I? Can he feel the satisfaction that I feel at having seven hundred pounds at my bankers'?" and James Golfer grinned the ghastly grin of an incipient miser. He had begun to taste the pleasure of saving money, and he had to come to the investing stage, when he would probably waste all. It is in the nature of public companies to offer peculiar advantages to investors, and then to crumble to pieces. Public companies, as a rule, are got up for the benefit of promoters and directors—the public have to suffer, while the former grow fat on other people's money.

It was past eleven when Mr. Golfer reached the War-office, and inquired of the messenger in the hall at the principal entrance, what room Mr. Geoffray Trevellian was in. He was directed hither and thither, up and down stairs, through passages, halls, and corridors, till he was ill and giddy, and came to the conclusion that the sooner that incongruous building known as the War-office, in Pall Mall, is pulled down, and another built in its place, the better.

At length he reached the room in which Mr. Trevellian worked, and found that he had not yet arrived.

"He is late this morning," said Golfer, to the messenger.

"It's his usual time," said the messenger, adding, "here he comes."

Looking down the stairs, Golfer saw Geoffray Trevellian ascending, and made bold to stop him. Trevellian was in a bad humour. He had drank rather more than was good for him the night before at Teddington, and a couple of sodas and brandy had not restored him to his normal condition.

"Can I speak to you, sir?" said Golfer.

"No you can't; I'm in a hurry. If you have a letter, or a bill, or any anything, send it in," answered Trevellian.

Golfer, who was an adept in this sort of work, placed himself before the green-baize door, which, when open, would have allowed Trevellian to dart into his sanctuary, like a rabbit into its warren.

"O," exclaimed Trevellian coolly; "I know what you are. Who do you come from?"

"Messrs. Peddie and Lever; and I have got—"

"Yes, yes; I know what you've got as well as you do yourself, my good fellow; you need not bawl it out all over the place," replied Trevellian testily. "Now these men haven't behaved well; these Peddie and Lever. If they'd have told me Smally and Pegtop were going to extremities, I'd have accepted service, and you would have been saved the disagreeable task of hanging about here in wait for me: or, perhaps, it is a congenial occupation? It's an awful bore to have to deal with low solicitors."

Golfer handed him the writ, which he had procured going along.

"Look here," continued Trevellian. "Tell Peddie and Lever I'll send them a cheque for their costs, and they must get Smally and Pegtop to wait. That's what I generally do in these cases."

"Excuse me, Mr. Trevellian," said Golfer, in a low tone; "can I see you anywhere this evening?"

"What do you want to see me for?" was the reply.

"I can't tell you here; but if you will meet me in the Burlington Arcade at five o'clock, and come somewhere and have a bit of dinner with me, I shall have something to say which you will find interesting."

"No, I won't do that," cried Trevellian. "Come to my club at six, and send your card up, I'll talk to you—The Windham, St. James's-square."

And putting the writ in his pocket, he walked into his room, while Golfer took his departure, accompanied by the ill-looks of the messenger, who felt sorry now that he had pointed out Mr. Trevellian to so indifferent a fellow as a writ-server.

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CHAPTER V.

THE INTERVIEW AT THE CLUB.

THERE were seven men besides himself in Trevellian's room at the War-office, and they had all arrived when he put in a tardy appearance. The head of the room looked at him angrily, and said, "I do think, Mr. Trevellian, that you might contrive to come a little earlier."

"Do you? I don't," answered Trevellian coolly, as he sat down at his table, after hanging up his hat and coat.

There were a lot of letters waiting for him to read and answer; but, pushing them on one side, he exclaimed, "Has any one got the *Times*?"

"Here it is," replied a man near him, tossing it over as he spoke.

Trevellian cast his eyes over the paper, and after that read some of his letters. Then he got up with a yawn, and said he must visit a friend of his, who was in a different office, and away he went.

The friend was Edward Wilton, whom he wished to see particularly, to get news of Chérie St. Ange, he having left Teddington in the morning, while Trevellian and the others departed in the special at break of day.

Wilton was not so fresh as he might have been. Night-work will leave its mark upon its youngest and strongest votaries.

"How do?" he said, as his friend entered. "I feel wretchedly ill this morning. How are you?"

"Fresh as a rose," answered Trevellian; which was not strictly matter of fact. "How did you leave Miss St. Ange?"

"Much better than any one expected," replied Wilton. "We did not anticipate that she would be at breakfast this morning, but she was; and all the harm the accident did her was a short fright, thanks to you."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Trevellian. "When will it be convenient for me to come and pay my respects?"

"Any time you like. Don't stand upon ceremony with us."

"I don't mean to, and shall run up on Saturday. Do you row?"

"A little. I can feather, and that is all. I don't think I could sit an outrigger, or manage anything but a tub."

"We will go on the river in the afternoon, if you like."

"Nothing would please me more," replied Wilton. "We can go down and visit some friends of mine at Barnes. One is Arden, whom you met, and the other is Lord Bracken, who are both at a private tutor's there. But I say, old fellow, don't you get smitten in a particular quarter. I mean Chérie St. Ange."

"Don't talk such utter rot," interrupted Trevellian in a tone of displeasure. "One is not obliged to fall in love with a girl because one saves her life."

"No, of course not. I did not mean anything. It was only a joke of mine," answered Wilton laughing.

"That appointment holds good, then, for Saturday?"

"Certainly."

Trevellian went back to his room and did some work till lunch-time; after that he did a little more; but he left the office as soon as he conveniently could. He dined at his club, ordering red mullets and a spatch-cock, which he had scarcely finished washing down with a bottle of still hock, when Mr. Golfer was announced. He had him shown into the visitors' room, and joined him almost immediately, saying, as he wiped his mouth with his pocket-handkerchief, "Now, sir, I am at your service. What is the nature of your business with me?"

"I believe you are in want of money, Mr. Trevellian," replied Golfer, holding his hat in his hand and twisting it round by the brim.

"That is an odd question for you to ask me. Have you forgotten your little achievement of this morning?" replied Trevellian.

"No, sir. That is what emboldened me to seek this interview and say what I have done."

"Be good enough, before you go any further, to tell me who and what are you," replied Trevellian.

"Certainly, sir. I am a clerk in the office of Peddie and Lever, as you know. My name, as you also know, is Golfer, and I lodge in the house of Major Wilton at Teddington."

"You lodge there?" cried Trevellian, suddenly becoming interested. "How the deuce did you get into a decent family like that?"

"I am only a poor clerk, sir, but I have always borne a good name and been highly respectable," answered Golfer in his humble way. "But Major Wilton is well acquainted with my employers, and he kindly took me in, and allows me to live in his house for the consideration of a weekly payment."

"Are you on friendly terms with the family?"

"Yes; I do as I like there."

"Were you at the ball last night?"

"Yes," again replied Golfer; "and I saw the accident to Miss St. Ange, who is a charming young lady, and one whom I have a great regard for. She ought to have been an heiress."

"Ought to have been?"

"She would have been, if her father had not, as they say, died intestate."

"As they say!" repeated Trevellian.

"That is the current report."

"Is there any doubt about it? If there is, her friends ought to see into it."

"Miss St. Ange cannot be said to have any friends," answered Golfer; "because Major Wilton is an old

soldier, and knows nothing about law. He would protect her if any one insulted her, but beyond that he is powerless. I thought over this young lady's case years ago, and I wished that I stood in some near relation to her, for then I should have felt myself empowered to act."

"In what way?" demanded Trevellian.

"In asserting her rights. She ought to be in the possession of a hundred thousand pounds which is now enjoyed by M. Commarin St. Ange, an old Paris notary, who is already rich, and were he not a miser would not think of robbing an orphan as he has done. The letters of his brother, addressed to him, must have told him what his brother's intentions were, and he took advantage of the loss of the will to impose upon her, and cancel the intentions of the testator."

"This is strong language, Mr. Golfer: and how comes it that you think yourself justified in using it?" inquired Trevellian.

"I have good grounds for it," answered Golfer.

"It seems to me," said Trevellian, "that my interest in Miss St. Ange has led me to divert from the subject we had before us—if indeed we had any subject at all. Will you oblige me, without any further beating about the bush, to say why you wanted to see me?"

"With pleasure. This, of course, is a privileged communication, and I speak, as we lawyers say, without prejudice," returned Golfer. "You are in difficulties: and if you will place yourself in my hands, I think I can extricate you from them. Tell me how much you owe, and give me the power to buy-up your debts. You will then have one creditor, instead of fifty, perhaps."

"This is a very startling proposition," said Trevellian. "I dare say I owe a couple of thousand pounds."

"Have you ever paid anybody?"

"Never. No one has had a halfpenny from me."

"Are your friends well off?"

"On the contrary, they have sufficient to live upon, and that is all."

"The most credulous creditor would not expect them to pay your debts?"

"I should think not. I don't know how far human credulity can go; but I should say that any London tradesman who expected my people to pay my debts was a man who relied on false information."

"That will do. Your two thousand pounds' worth of debts ought to be bought up, Mr. Trevellian, for five hundred. You see I am candid with you, and I am the man to do it."

"You!" exclaimed Trevellian. "Well, if you can, you have my perfect permission. I don't want to throw cold water upon any scheme which may be of service to myself. Buy up my debts, and be my only creditor, if you wish it; and you can add to your obligation by giving me a little ready money."

"That I cannot promise to do," replied Golfer. "If you would place yourself in a position to marry well, I daresay that I could oblige you."

"I don't think I can hold out any hope of that sort," replied Trevellian.

"Has Miss St. Ange no charms?" continued Golfer, curiously eyeing Trevellian.

"My good sir, do not be impertinent," replied Trevellian. "I am at a loss to understand you. First of all, you tell me you are an inmate of Major Wilton's family or house, and you profess a knowledge of Miss St. Ange's present abode, and prospects, and antece-

dents. Then, again, you speak about marrying well, and in the same breath seem—as I take you—to suggest Miss St. Ange as a desirable match. From what I have heard I should say that she was directly the reverse in a pecuniary point of view.”

“And that is the only point of view to regard it from,” said Golfer, with his accustomed assurance. “If you will be content to take my word for it, you may rest satisfied that Miss St. Ange is worth any man’s while to cultivate. I know more respecting her affairs than she herself or any one else knows. Cultivate her, as I suggest, and I will tell you this: the man who marries Chérie St. Ange will marry three thousand a-year.”

“Have you told this to the young lady?”

“No. Nor do I intend to.”

“But—”

“Just give me a written authority to buy-up your debts. Assign them to me, and we can talk about other things afterwards. If you want twenty pounds to-day, you can have it.”

Trevellian did as Golfer told him, and followed his instructions to the letter. He was surprised to see the lawyer’s clerk take a blank cheque on so respectable a bank as the Union out of his pocket-book, and fill it up for twenty pounds. It was a thing he could not do, and he envied him; but he did not think of the privations Golfer had undergone to enable him to save money. When Trevellian felt inclined for a cigar, he would go into a shop, and buy, perhaps, half-a-crown’s worth, at four- or sixpence apiece, and give more than half to his friends. In preference to walking he would have a cab, and so on with everything. He had no idea

of economy. Money burnt a hole in his pocket; and it is scarcely too much to say that he was not happy while he had any. This recklessness made him live beyond his income, and he was generally in difficulties.

"You legal men are lucky fellows, Mr. Golfer," he observed.

"We work, sir, and we are careful; that is all," answered Golfer.

When Golfer had everything signed and arranged as he wished, he was ready to act, and was about to take his leave of his new client, when the latter suggested the propriety of something to drink. Golfer would eat and drink anything he had not to pay for, and he had often dined sumptuously on a penny bun when he had not much money, and would not draw any out of his bank; so he accepted the offer, drank a glass or two of wine, and went home to bed, so that he might get up in the morning with a clear head, and be ready for business. He promised Trevellian that he would see him again in a fortnight to report progress, and in the mean time advised him to cultivate the acquaintance of Chérie St. Ange.

This advice perplexed Trevellian greatly. He looked upon Chérie as a poor dependent on the bounty of Major Wilton; but Golfer's hints induced him on reflection to take a different view of the matter. Of course Golfer had an interested motive in buying-up his debts, and expected to recoup himself for his outlay some day; and Trevellian began to think that his prospects were better than they really were, or such a shrewd man as Golfer evidently was would not have taken such an interest in his affairs. At any rate, he could not go

wrong, because it was better to have one creditor than a multitude of the "clamouring" beasts, as he called them; and so Golfer was the rock on which he built his house for the present.

CHAPTER VI.

LORD BRACKEN'S BLUNDER.

TREVELLIAN was at a loss to understand why Golfer took an interest in him; but he was satisfied with the fact, especially when it took the form of a twenty-pound cheque, which he got cashed the following morning. It was not his custom to bother himself about anything; he took things very much as they came, and did not approve of meeting trouble half-way.

When he reached the office he found a letter from home. His home was a small cottage, delightfully situated at Malvern, where his father, an old line officer on half-pay, lived with his wife. Geoffray Trevellian was their only child. They had sent him to Marlborough school, and afterwards got him into the War-office, through Captain Trevellian's interest with the Commander-in-chief, who gave the lad a letter of introduction to the prime minister of the day, and the thing was done. Geoffray's parents were not well off, though they were comfortably situated, and as their wants were few and their habits inexpensive, they lived a very quiet and happy life.

In the letter, Captain Trevellian, after treating of local news of no particular interest to any one but the

writer, said: "I met with a loss last month, I am sorry to say, by lending a little money to a young man I met on the hills, and who was staying here for his health. He has gone away, and, strange to tell, left no address. I am reluctant to believe any ill of him, and hope I may some day get back my own. But what I wanted to say is this: If you should be burdened with fifteen or twenty pounds more than you know what to do with, it would be very acceptable just now to your good mother, who, I am told, has several little demands pressing upon an exhausted purse which I shall not be able to supply until next quarter. And now I must finish this begging letter by trusting that you are in the enjoyment of robust health, and doing all that befits a gentleman such as you are by birth and education."

Trevellian, with all his affected indifference, was not a bad-hearted fellow, and he felt sincerely rejoiced that he had fifteen pounds to spare, and without any delay he put the notes in an envelope, had the letter registered and sent off to Malvern, having written a few kind words, which cheered the hearts of the old people wonderfully, and made them bless their stars to think that they had such a son. It was God's goodness, they said, and they knew he would be the support of their old age should they stand in need of him. They little thought that he had been running steadily into debt, and that his life altogether was not so immaculate as they, in their simplicity, imagined.

The winter was coming on, and there was not much attraction in the country. Rowing was not in high favour, and in most boat-houses everything was made snug, and the season considered over.

Trevellian, however, took a fancy to the country, and seeking Wilton, asked him what sort of a place Teddington was to live at.

"Awfully jolly," replied Wilton. "I wish you would come down there. I could find you a place cheap and handy to the station."

"If you will look out for me, and let me know, I shall be much obliged, and will run down some day and make up my mind what to do," Trevellian answered. "You see, I am very comfortable in my diggings in Duke-street; but I want a change, and I think Richmond, or somewhere near, will do me good."

Edward Wilton promised faithfully to do his best, and the result was soon apparent. Trevellian liked the lodgings that he found for him, and took up his abode near the Major's house, and of course within a few hundred yards of Chérie St. Ange, who had recovered her serenity, and had forgotten all the danger the fire had exposed her to, but not the gratitude she owed to her gallant preserver.

Major Wilton was quite pleased to think that Mr. Trevellian had become a neighbour of his, and would insist upon his coming frequently to his house in the evening. Here he was constantly in Miss St. Ange's society and that of Edina Wilton. Miss Eddie had conceived a tender feeling for Trevellian, and it was not without a pang of jealousy that she saw the attention which Chérie received from the man who had saved her life. Trevellian was not very demonstrative. He did not get up in the morning and buy flowers for Chérie, or write spooney verses and mope and sigh, nor did he say much: but the eyes of an envious and jealous woman can tell by a look and

a word how and for whom the heart of a man is beating, and Miss Eddie knew very well that Trevelian cared for Miss St. Ange, and that probably the interest he took in her would be changed into a warmer and stronger feeling as it developed and matured.

For the first time in her life Miss Eddie began to dislike her friend and companion, Chérie St. Ange. She found her tedious, and took exception to her dress as well as her personal appearance. Her hair, she said, was not golden, it was a bright red; her complexion was anything but delicate, and she was very fast and forward in her manner.

Chérie noticed a change in the treatment she received, and was unable to account for it. She was unconscious of having intentionally given offence; but when appealed to, Edina Wilton would give her no explanation; and Chérie went away to her chamber to cry in secret, and pray that Edina's heart might be turned; which, with childish simplicity, she hoped would soon be accomplished.

As for herself, she scarcely knew what love was. Certainly she had never felt its power, and was unconscious of having attracted Trevelian to her side. If she had known that Miss Eddie wanted him for a lover, she would have done all she could to make him love her, and transfer his allegiance.

Matthew Arden and Lord Bracken were more together than ever, and were very often at Teddington. The latter cultivated Edward Wilton just as Trevelian had done, and with the same object in view. He was smitten with the charms of the pretty French girl, and was never so happy as when in her company. Mr. and Mrs. Arden fondly fancied that his visits to Ted-

dington were induced by a regard for Tibby. It is true that the young lady could have told a different tale; but Mrs. Arden was not a mother who laid herself out for her daughter's confidence, and she consequently knew no more of the real state of her heart than she did of the price of wool in New South Wales.

Bracken and Trevellian met constantly in a tobacco-shop, at a billiard-room, or at the houses of the Ardens and the Wiltons; but they did not knock-up a friendship. They were distantly civil and scrupulously polite to one another, but that was all. Each distrusted the other, and saw what his intentions were with regard to Chérie St. Ange, who, it must be allowed, had achieved a great triumph in bringing to her feet Lord Bracken and Trevellian, both big fish worthy the angler's ambition and of capture; but the best of the joke was, that she did not know she had been so successful, and would have cared very little if she had.

This indifference to the tender passion, however, wore off by degrees. She could not remain insensible to the attention which Lord Bracken paid her, and her little heart, flutter as it would, was not proof against the arrows of Cupid. She fell in love without knowing it, as many a girl has done before, but it was with Bracken, and not with Trevellian.

Bracken ventured to write to Chérie occasionally, and she treasured up his letters. At first she would not answer them, but at length she was induced to do so, and they established a correspondence. For some time they invented and practised a peculiar mode of letter-writing. The rule was, to sacrifice the first and every alternate sentence of the letter, and read what remains. For instance, we will suppose that he had written to her

asking her to stay away from church on Sunday, and meeting him, go for a walk in the fields; her answer would run thus, so as to convey a false impression if it should fall into hands other than those it was intended for :

“Do not think, I will meet you, on any consideration whatever, at the old stile in the lane: you should not dream of going out, on Sunday. I consider it very wicked, while the bells are ringing, to wander about the fields, at church-time and during divine service.”

Now this letter, properly read, with the first and alternate sentences omitted, will read in this way:—
“I will meet you at the old stile in the lane on Sunday, while the bells are ringing, at church-time.”

This ingenious contrivance afforded them much amusement; but at length Bracken got tired of concealment and determined to make an avowal of his affection for Clérie St. Ange, which the latter could show to her friends. Consequently he sat down and wrote a letter, and having finished it, he wrote another to Miss Arden for her to show her people, so as to explain the nature of his visits to River-side House, and put an end to any extravagant hopes that its inmates might have formed.

In the first letter he said: “I have resolved, my dear child, to put a stop to any doubts and conjectures respecting my intentions towards you, which those who have observed us narrowly of late may have indulged in. I must take an early opportunity of coming over and seeing the person most proper to talk to. I am convinced that you will make no objection, and I sincerely hope that I shall be studying your happiness and my own in adopting the course which I now suggest.”

He signed his name with loving and affectionate additions, and then began in this way the second letter, which was intended for Miss Tibby :

“My dear young lady,—From what I have heard from your own lips, I know that what I am about to say will prove agreeable to you. It is necessary that I should speak plainly, because your friends will think that I am purposely deceiving you and them. I am about to engage myself to a young lady whom you are acquainted with, and I feel confident that you will be sincere in wishing us the happiness we hope for. I have to thank you for many kindnesses, and shall regret extremely any unforeseen occurrence which may at any time interrupt our friendship.—Believe me always your sincere well-wisher,
BRACKEN.”

Arden came into the room just as he had finished the second letter. The envelopes were directed, one to Miss Arden, and the other to Miss St. Ange. Bracken did not wish Matthew Arden to see what he was doing, or who he was writing to, so he slipped the letters into the envelopes hastily, moistened the adhesive mixture, and put them in his pocket, having done what he would not have done for a thousand pounds.

He had made a mistake.

The letter directed to Miss St. Ange contained the epistle intended for Miss Arden, and that directed to the latter held the affectionate effusion, hinting obscurely at a promise of marriage, which should have reached the fair Chérie.

“Will you come for a pull on the river? The sun will shine for an hour or so.”

“I will smoke a pipe, if you like to paddle me

about," answered Bracken. "I want to post a couple of letters as we go down the village."

It was a fine day in winter, and though cold, the air was fresh and bracing. The young men started together; and as Bracken passed the post-office, he dropped the letters in the box, and laid the foundation of more confusion and positive harm than he had any idea of.

CHAPTER VII.

TREVELLIAN HAS HIS DOUBTS.

IN less than a year's time Lord Bracken knew that he would be entirely his own master, and he did not think that he could do better than marry a pretty girl who pleased him and to whom he was devotedly attached. He loved Chérie St. Ange, and he had some reason to suppose that she cared for him.

Trevellian endeavoured to make progress in that quarter, but he could not tell how he got on, because Miss St. Ange was so innocent and so artless, that she was frequently accused of coquetry by those who did not know her. She was agreeable enough to him to induce him to think that he had a chance of winning her heart.

Golfer carried out all that he undertook. It was a characteristic of Golfer's that he was thorough. If he said he would do a thing, he invariably kept his word. In the present instance he expended nearly five hundred pounds of his hard-earned savings in buying-up Trevellian's debts. This he effected by representing to

the creditors that he contemplated an appeal to the bankruptcy court, and that if they did not take what was offered, they would get nothing. Some stood out, but he eventually got them all of one mind; and after he had finished his voluntary labour, Trevellian had nothing to harass him but a judgment-debt which Golfer had against him.

"You give me an acknowledgment payable at sight," said Golfer, "for two thousand three hundred pounds; the three hundred's interest, you know, and for my trouble. I shall sue you, and get judgment. It's simple, and gives me my proper position."

"Gives you the whip-hand, you mean," said Trevellian.

"I shall never use it. Don't be alarmed. If you are," replied Golfer, "we can break off at once. You can give me the actual cash I have expended, and——"

"No, no! I am satisfied," interrupted Trevellian. "Get your judgment, and do what you like. I don't suppose you will do me any harm, because you will lose your money if you do."

So Golfer got a judgment against Geoffray Trevellian, which enabled him to arrest him at any moment; consequently he was in his power. This was accomplishing the first step he had in view. Having done so, he again sought Trevellian.

He very often met him. Sometimes they went down in the same train to Teddington from Waterloo, but Golfer travelled second class, while Trevellian went first; and Golfer would rather have experienced the pangs of sudden death, if there are any, or undergone slow tortures, than have paid the difference at any time for the honour of riding in the same carriage with his

friend, though he would gladly have cheated the railway company, if he had not feared that his ticket would be examined before starting.

When Trevellian reached his lodgings in the evening, he lighted a pipe, and wondered what he could do to pass away the time. His servant brought him a letter from Golfer, in which the latter said he should be glad to run over for an hour for a confidential chat, if agreeable. Trevellian replied that it would be agreeable, and the messenger went back. Presently Golfer put in an appearance. Trevellian regarded him as a cad, and could under no circumstances have made a friend of him. His hats were bad, narrow-brimmed, and so shiny as to be suspicious of soap or grease. His coats were generally frock, unbuttoned, and worn at the sleeves and elbows. In winter he wore an imitation sealskin waistcoat. "The vest, as advertised, ten and six, Lemuel Brothers, equal to bespoke," whatever the latter expression may mean. His shirts were of flannel, and he took care to let every one know it, for he usually wore a slip of black ribbon, which, as a rule, set-off in bold relief the edges of a dirty collar. His boots were of Northampton make, and hideously square at the toes. Of gloves his hands were generally innocent; and when indeed he wore gloves, the magnitude of his hands became horribly apparent, in the loose eighteen-penny bags he thought it advisable to purchase.

When he came to Trevellian's lodgings he had on the "Lemuel Brothers," and the "vest" shone resplendent after two years' service, though it must be confessed it had somewhat lost fur, and was not so fluffy as had been the original rabbit-skin.

"Good-evening, Golfer; how do?" exclaimed Tre-

vellian. "Bring yourself to an anchor, and say what you'll drink. Whisky cold! So you shall. The 'bacca is near you; help yourself."

When his wants were supplied, Golfer said, "The time has now come for us to understand one another, Mr. Trevellian. I have done a good deal for you, but you can't suppose for a moment that I have done it for nothing. There is nothing so very fascinating about you, that I should throw my little fortune at your feet and sink it in a gulf,—is there?"

"I don't care about the sort of language you are using to me," answered Trevellian; "I am not accustomed to it: and if you think you're going to bully and dictate to me just because I owe you money, you're dismally mistaken, my good fellow."

Golfer had a way, a peculiar way, of grinning, and whenever anything amused him, he indulged in this burlesque of a smile, and a ghastly grin was the disagreeable and irritating result.

"I will endeavour to make my remarks as palatable as I can," he said; "and I hope I shall be successful, for I don't want to quarrel with you. We must row together, and then we shall land a large stake."

"Still, I am at a loss to comprehend your meaning," said Trevellian. "What can there possibly be in common between us?"

"What would you give me if I were to tell you how to get hold of a hundred thousand pounds?" said Golfer.

"Honestly?"

"Of course."

"You should have ten per cent."

"Write me a letter to that effect. You are a

gentleman, and you would not disown your handwriting. As a legal security your letter would not be worth much. I could not sue you at common law, because I should be unable to prove a consideration, unless," he added, with a laugh, "getting a man a wife is a consideration."

"A wife! What do you mean?" asked Trevellian surprised.

"How far have you gone with Miss St. Ange?"

"It is an impertinent question, and I don't know what right you have to ask it," said Trevellian flushing angrily; "but I will tell you that I believe I have made some impression upon her. I have never thought seriously of marrying her. At first I scarcely knew why I made up to her. Latterly I have done it to cut out a fellow you have seen at Major Wilton's."

"Lord Bracken," suggested Golfer.

"Yes. I don't think I should have stayed so long at Teddington as I have, if it had not been for a little rivalry which has sprung up between us."

"Then you admit that you have tried to make this young lady love you," said Golfer with what seemed an affectation of virtuous indignation, "without any intention of making her the only reparation you have in your power? You would willingly break her heart, and leave somebody else to mend it. Is this the conduct of a gentleman, Mr. Trevellian?"

"I don't want to be catechised and lectured by you," responded Trevellian sulkily.

"As a friend of Miss St. Ange, I have a right to make these remarks."

"Have you?" said Trevellian rudely. "I should not think you were able to call yourself a friend simply

because you happen to lodge in the house. If you are a friend, and think any serious wrong has been done your protégée, why not marry her yourself?"

"She would not have me," answered Golfer rather sadly, all the rage vanishing out of his eyes. "I have neither name, looks, position, manners, or education to charm her; but believe me or not, I love that girl as a brother, and I would not see any harm come to her for ever so much. I would rather lose the little money I have scraped together and invested in my present company, which I will make bold to call 'Trevellian and Co., Limited,' than have a hair of her head injured."

He spoke with such energy that Trevellian regarded him with that admiration which we all feel for any one who is in earnest.

"I had hoped that you would love her," continued Golfer; "and that knowing you both, I might continue a friend of the family, and carry on the love I have for the mother to the children. If I had dared tell my love, I would have done so long ago; but I'm not a fool, Mr. Trevellian. I know as well as you could tell me that I am not a lady's man, and I was sure—as I am now—that I could be nothing more than a friend or an acquaintance to Miss St. Ange, though I worship the ground she walks upon. What remains for me to do? Simply to look out for a husband for her, who would treat her well and as she deserved. I don't believe in Lord Bracken; it is not likely that he means to deal honestly with her. A peer of the realm, with all the money they say he's got, doesn't go and marry a poor governess and companion. He may make a fool of her, and then she can take her chance; the world won't blame him, but they will blame the woman, poor dear."

Mr. Golfer was showing a new part of his character to Trevellian, who listened and marvelled.

"I am sorry I should have disappointed your high expectations," he said.

"I've a good mind to chuck it up," said Mr. Golfer gloomily, as he relapsed into his every-day way of expressing himself once more.

"Let us talk about the money," exclaimed Trevellian after a pause.

"That's more in your way," replied Golfer almost fiercely. "It is all the men of the present day think about. What's your objection to Miss St. Ange? Tell me that first. If she had a pot of money, would you marry her?"

"That would alter the complexion of things materially. Look here, Golfer; I am a poor man, and she is poorer than me. What good should I do her by marrying her, even if she would have me? I can't afford a wife, unless it be a rich one. It is one of those luxuries utterly beyond the reach of a Government clerk like me. It is as much as I can do to get along at present. My friends cannot spare anything; and Miss St. Ange would be little better off than a labourer's wife if she were to bear my name."

"She's not the poor creature you take her for," said Golfer. "If justice is done her, she ought to have three thousand a-year in Government Three per Cent Stock."

"If!"

Trevellian repeated this little monosyllable sarcastically.

"There is no 'if' about it. She's got it, and I can prove it to-morrow."

"You!" ejaculated Trevellian.

"Yes. I, James Golfer, common-law clerk at Peddie and Lever's, Bedford-row, Holborn, E.C.," answered that individual playfully.

This declaration completely knocked Trevellian off his centre, as he would have said; and he had some difficulty in believing that it was true.

"Will you promise me," Golfer went on, "that what I am going to tell you about Miss St. Ange's fortune you will keep a profound secret, unless I give you permission to speak?"

"Ought I to make such a promise?" queried Trevellian.

"I shall not utter another word unless you do," replied Golfer decisively.

"I will give you the required promise, and declare upon my word that I will consider anything you may say to me sacred," Trevellian declared.

He was carried away by his curiosity to hear more, though he thought at the time he was doing wrong in making such a promise.

"You have heard, I daresay," began Golfer, "that Mr. St. Ange died intestate. No such thing. Peddie and Lever drew a will, which was duly sealed, signed, and delivered, and in this will Mr. St. Ange bequeaths all his fortune, amounting to 100,000*l.*, in the English funds, to his daughter Chérie St. Ange, who becomes the heiress of the testator."

"But no will was found."

"I know it. Mr. Peddie remembered the making of the will, and so did Mr. Lever: but they could not find the will, and every one supposed that the deceased gentleman, during one of his visits to the office, must

have taken it away with him, and either destroyed or mislaid it. His sudden death prevented any explanation upon this point. However, to make a long story short, that will is now in my possession."

"In yours! Impossible!" said Trevellian."

"I have it, sir; and can put my hand on it at a moment's notice," said Golfer, slapping the table with a proud consciousness of power.

"Since when, may I ask, have you had this valuable instrument?"

"About six months now."

"And you have not said anything to anybody?"

"You are the first living being to whom I have opened my mouth," replied Golfer.

"Don't you think you have been acting very wrong in keeping Miss St. Ange out of her property for so long a time?" said Trevellian.

"No, I don't," answered Golfer in his blunt way: "I don't think anything of the sort. I like to do things in my own way. Now I'll put it to you. Suppose, when I had discovered this valuable instrument, as you very properly call it, I had rushed up to Peddie or Lever with it in my hand. They would have thanked me, and said it was a fortunate circumstance, and that Providence arranges everything for the best, though it moves in a mysterious way. After a few more platitudes, Peddie or Lever would have had a cab and gone down to Teddington to see the Major, and there would have been a great fuss, and everything that could be done to make costs would have been resorted to as a matter of course. I should have been shoved on one side and got no thanks—perhaps Miss St. Ange would not have heard my name mentioned."

"That is possible enough," said Trevellian.

"But I want to be somebody in this matter, and I want to get something out of it for myself."

"Is not that something like robbing the orphan?"

"I think not. Suppose I get ten thousand out of it—ten thou.'s my price—don't I deserve it? Don't I give the orphan ninety thousand, whereas she wouldn't get a penny if I liked to put the will on the fire, and see it burn to a white ash, without saying a word or making a sign?"

"I can't contradict you."

"I had hoped," said Golfer, "that you would by this time have fallen in love with Chérie St. Ange. Not with her money, mind you—I don't want that—and that you would covenant to pay me my price, and take the girl as your wife: and now I have a good mind, Mr. Trevellian, to tell you that, if you don't go in and win, I'll put the screw on, and send you through the bankruptcy court, which will be equivalent to ruining you. I can do it: for my judgment holds good. I renewed it yesterday, and I can put it in force at any moment."

Trevellian looked blankly at Golfer, as if he wondered how his commonplace-looking head could have invented such a clever plot as that which he had just listened to. After that, his eyes flashed, and he seemed as if labouring hard to suppress an almost irresistible impulse to kick the lawyer's clerk out of the room. He got over that; and his third feeling was to talk matters over quietly, and examine into his own heart and consult his future prospects, and decide generally as to what was best to be done under the circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUT OF HIS RECKONING.

THE revelation to which Trevellian had listened was certainly a most startling one. He thought for a long time over it, and at length told Golfer that he must come and see him again on the following evening, if he could make it convenient, and he would then see if he could come to a decision and tell him if he really loved Miss St. Ange sufficiently to make her his wife. "I will be candid with you in this matter," he said; "and if I find on reflection and consideration that I do not care sincerely for Miss St. Ange, I will advise you to look out for some one else to help you in your ambitious schemes. I am not a mere fortune-hunter, though you may have inferred so from what I have said. The fact is, most young men like to have a little money with their wives if they can get it. The pleasure that a man derives from the society of a beautiful woman is not compensation enough for the worry she entails and the deprivation of comforts, and the giving-up of pet habits, supposing he has a limited income."

"A husband ought not to be selfish," moralised Mr. Golfer.

"It is all very well to say that; but men are naturally selfish. I like theatres and music-halls occasionally, and I should miss an evening now and then at Cremorne. I could not take my wife to the theatre unless I had a cab there and back; and I should have to pay for two instead of one, unless I knew some man on the press and got orders, which I hate doing, as

I always think it looks mean to go into a theatre with paper. I could not degrade my wife to the level of a music-hall or Cremorne."

"Why degrade yourself?" asked Mr. Golfer sharply.

"We will not discuss that point, if you please," returned Trevellian, discreetly avoiding that battleground. "Now, supposing I continued to indulge in my music-hall and my Cremorne, I should have to tell my wife some untruth to account for my stopping out, which would be a bore: for unless she were a fool or an angel——"

"Are the terms synonymous?"

"Very nearly so,—she would not permit me, without energetic remonstrance, to spend my evenings away from her. This is all very well; but I, for one, don't care about being pinned to any woman's apron-string."

"Do you mean to say that you have a disinclination to marriage altogether?" inquired Golfer.

"I won't say that. I am only trying to instil into your mind that a man is not mercenary when he asks for money in a wife to make up for the disadvantages and annoyances she is sure to entail upon him. I have heard people talk about the charms of a fireside; your wife waiting for you when you come home after a hard day's work, meeting you in the hall and kissing you tenderly. But suppose you don't want to be kissed? What are you to do in the evening? Your wife will look glumpy if you read a book or a magazine, and, as a rule, women can't talk sensibly; that is to say, they are incapable of sustaining a conversation upon any matter of interest to a man. When a woman marries, she generally gives up her music, or, if she does not, she wants practice, and forgets everything except a

few stock pieces that one has heard hundreds of times before during one's courtship, and which one hates for that very reason, because very often it reminds one of a past folly and an irrevocable error. Sometimes the stock pieces are played so carelessly and so execrably badly that the false notes jar upon the ear, and create a disgust which is palpable at the finish of the performance; and getting a scowl instead of a smile your wife begins to cry and makes matters worse. Then, again, women can't play chess or backgammon, and call cribbage low; or if they have a knowledge of these games, it is so superficial as to enable you to get an easy victory, which is no fun, time after time. As often as not, you are driven out of your own house to smoke a pipe or a cigar. Your wife never has anything to say; never goes anywhere; never sees any one. Your baby is always ill, and will wake you up in the night with its propensity for squalling when all other decent created things are fast asleep. Your home naturally enough becomes a worry and a bore: and you have to look at every shilling before you spend it: so that you cannot offer a friend a cigar, or ask him to have a glass of wine at your club, without your conscience reproaching and telling you that you are robbing your wife, who could lay the money out much better in buying a new pair of shoes for your child."

Mr. Goller laughed at this catalogue of woes. "Any one would think you spoke from experience," he said.

"I feel deeply and strongly on the subject," he replied; "and I am convinced that the view I take is the right one. But we need not go any further; I hope I have established the position I took up. If I think that I can honestly make up my mind to propose to Miss St

Ange, I will let you know; though we are counting our chickens before they are hatched, for I don't know whether she will have me."

"Take her by storm. I am not afraid of the result, if you lay siege manfully," answered Golfer.

The conversation ended there; and Golfer went home. On the following evening he called again upon Trevellian, who told him that he had finally decided to propose to Miss St. Ange, and that he had come to that conclusion unbiassed in the slightest degree by what he had heard respecting her fortune.

He gave Golfer an undertaking to pay him ten thousand pounds in the event of his marrying the heiress, and having the control of her fortune, or, at least, sufficient control to enable him to pay that sum stated.

In the mean time events were taking place which neither of them had calculated upon. The letters which Lord Bracken had posted at Barnes had been delivered at Teddington. Miss Arden received hers, and read it with considerable astonishment. Her mother also read it, looking over her shoulder, and was greatly elated in consequence.

It was the letter which Chérie St. Ange should have had, and, though vague in its terms, amounted, as Mrs. Arden properly thought, to a promise of marriage. Tibby was not at all pleased. Indeed, she could not understand the letter, after the conversation she had in the ball-room with Lord Bracken. In spite of her father's precaution, she was in love with one of his partner's sons, and they had carried on a clandestine correspondence for some time. Her mother was too much elated to notice her daughter's discomfiture, and ex-

claimed, "I thought it would come to this at last, and must congratulate you, my dear Tibby, upon having a chance of speedily becoming a lady of title."

Tibby dared not say that she was not at all ambitious of the honour; so she muttered something scarcely intelligible, and went up stairs, locking herself in her bed-room, and having a good cry without interruption.

Mrs. Arden waited impatiently for the coming of her husband, and fumed and fretted because he happened to be kept late in the City, and did not come by the usual train. His face was rather longer than usual when he did arrive, and at any other time she would have remarked this, and known that he had not had a very good day. City men generally show in their faces the sort of luck they have met with in business. The mercury of their personal barometer is easily forced up or down.

"How late you are!" she said.

"Late! It's a wonder you saw me at all. We've had a panic in the City, and I've bulled every stock for the last fortnight," growled Mr. Arden. "Two of our best customers will be ruined, and we shall lose a year's income, if something does not turn up to-morrow."

"Never mind business," exclaimed Mrs. Arden, with a lofty disdain. "What will you say when I tell you that Bracken has proposed to Tibby?"

"Proposed! his lordship proposed! you don't say so? That is good news," cried Mr. Arden, whose countenance lighted up. "I did not expect that; not just yet, at least."

"Didn't you? I did. See, here is the letter he has written her. It is rather brief and obscure, yet I think

there can only be one interpretation to be placed upon it."

The stock-broker took and read the letter, and said, "I am of your opinion; he is in love with the girl, and this is a proposal. He always seemed to me rather shy and timid. If he had not been, things would have come to a crisis before now. However, it is all right. I will see to it."

"If you will take my advice, dear, you will go over to his lordship to-morrow morning, before you go to business, and clench the matter. Tell him Tibby is willing to make a match of it, in such a way that he can't get out of it without an action for breach of promise," said the astute mother of the charming Tibby.

"Not the first thing. I must be in the City early, but I'll get away as soon as the danger which threatens us is over, and go down to his lordship and do as you suggest, my dear. Give me the letter."

"Do not lose it, in case of accidents," said Mrs. Arden, as she gave her husband the letter, which he put in his pocket.

"Not I!" he rejoined. "I never lost a valuable document in my life. You can order dinner. I shall not be long dressing."

He disappeared up stairs, indulging golden dreams of the honour which awaited his daughter, and which would reflect indirectly upon him. It would be so pleasant to talk in the City to his friends of my daughter Lady Bracken. He would have preferred a more grandly sounding name, such as Piantagenet, De Vere, or something of that nature, but he was tolerably satisfied with the reflection that she would be a peeress, and he wondered whether Bracken had a seat in the House of

Lords, and what sort of shooting he could give him at his country seats. Mr. Arden could have shot about as well with a broomstick as with a breech-loader; but he indulged pleasant visions of battues, in which, like Samson, he slew his thousands.

When he got to the City in the morning, things were rather better and prices recovered themselves. Getting an opportunity of speaking to his partner, he said, "The big thing has come off at last"

"What's that?" asked Mr. Fulling.

"Bracken has proposed to my daughter."

And Mr. Arden put his fingers in his waistcoat-pockets, and drew himself up to his full height, watching the effect of this tremendous announcement upon the trembling Fulling.

"Lord Bracken! The one I've heard you speak about!" exclaimed the latter.

Mr. Arden nodded his head.

"Going to marry your Tibby?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I never!" said Mr. Fulling, sinking into a chair, overcome with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

"There's a way of managing these things, Fulling," said Mr. Arden, in a patronising sort of manner. "It isn't everybody who's got the knack. But you see I've done it. I've landed a two-hundred-thousand-pound man, and a peer of the realm into the bargain. None of your knocked-out penniless sprigs of nobility, but a proper peer, sir, one who stands well with the aristocracy, and can ask the prime minister a favour, or dine with the Queen at Balmoral, if he happens to be going that way. That is what I call tact."

"I am sure I am very happy to hear it, Arden, very happy, and I hope the girl will find him all her fancy paints him; but these young noblemen are generally sad dogs," remarked Mr. Fulling.

"No fear; Tibby's been well brought up; and if he won't run in the snaffle, she'll try the curb."

"I wish you joy," Mr. Fulling went on, in the magnanimity of his heart; shook his partner by the hand, being all the time ready to wish him and his daughter every species of evil through sheer vexation.

As soon as he could get away Mr. Arden left the City and went down to Barnes. On inquiring he found that Lord Bracken had gone out, and would probably be found on the Common with a new dog which had just arrived for him from the country.

Thither he went, and on the Common found Bracken alone, if we except the dog, which was of the bull breed.

"How do?" exclaimed he, extending his hand. "Glad to see you. I have a present for Miss Arden. She spoke frequently to me about a dog. Here is one of the breed she admires; and if you will take it back with you, I shall be pleased."

"Certainly, my lord," replied Mr. Arden, whose face beamed with pleasure, thinking this commencement a good sign, as devoted lovers always make presents; and though one of Mr. Streeter's handsomest bracelets would have been far preferable, a bull-pup was better than nothing, if only as an indication of how the wind blew.

This was what he said to himself.

They walked along among the furze, and the pup jumped up about their legs, making Mr. Arden's trou-

sers anything but clean, owing to some thick clay in which he had been setting his paws.

"I suppose you can guess why I am here, my lord?" exclaimed Mr. Arden, after a brief pause, and putting on his blandest manner.

"No, indeed I can't. Have you any special reason for visiting me?" answered Bracken.

"Your letter, my lord——"

"O, ah, I see," interrupted Bracken. "I am sorry if its contents at all disappointed or offended you, because you have given me great hospitality, and your daughter is an amiable, agreeable girl."

"Offended! disappointed!" repeated Mr. Arden aghast.

"Yes; I don't suppose you are either one or the other, for you are a sensible man, Arden," continued Lord Bracken. "I thought it best, however, to say openly that I could not do myself the honour of an alliance with your family——"

He was obliged to stop abruptly in the midst of his speech, owing to a wild, maniacal laugh of Mr. Arden's.

That irascible gentleman tore open his coat, and from his pocket drew the letter which Tibby had received.

"That is your letter, my lord, I have every reason to believe?"

"That is my handwriting, and I daresay it is the letter I sent Miss Arden yesterday," replied Bracken, wondering at the man's vehemence.

"You admit it, and yet you have the audacity to endeavour to creep and crawl out of it. But you don't escape so easily, Lord Bracken; O, dear no," cried the broker, whose passion grew stronger each moment.

Lord Bracken took the letter and read it. He saw in a moment that he had made a mistake, and though much annoyed, calmly proceeded to set the merchant right.

"I am sorry to say that this letter was intended for a young lady, Miss St. Ange, with whom you are acquainted," he exclaimed; "I wrote one at the same time to your daughter, and the one I meant for her must have gone into the envelope directed to Miss St. Ange. It is a stupid blunder, but easily set right. Miss Arden can be nothing to me but a friend, and—"

Mr. Arden interrupted him, and threatened law-proceedings, which put the young nobleman on his mettle.

"O," he continued, "if that is how you talk, this interview is best not prolonged. You may do what you like, sir; and if you think you have a legal remedy for my unfortunate mistake, I leave it in your own hands. I cannot blame myself, for I have never given Miss Arden in any way to understand that she was dear to me."

"But, my lord—"

"I can hold no farther conversation with you, sir," said Bracken, interrupting him in his turn. "You have spoken of law—to your law I leave you; and I have the honour to wish you a very good-morning."

Whistling to his dog he strode away: while the merchant stood amidst the furze on the common, the picture of amaze, deep chagrin, and the blackest despair.

"Well, I never!" he muttered. "Here's a disappointment! What will my wife say? I wish I had not mentioned Tibby's brilliant prospects to my partner. How he will crow over me!"

CHAPTER IX.

CHÉRIE'S FLIGHT.

THERE was nothing for Mr. Arden to do but to go home, which he did by the next train.

Mrs. Arden received the news he brought with silent rage, feeling that she could tear Chérie St. Ange to pieces for supplanting her daughter in Lord Bracken's affections; but Miss Tibby was delighted.

Towards evening Edina Wilton called, and Mrs. Arden could scarcely bring herself to receive her with common civility, though she strove hard to stifle her rage; but when she heard her reason for calling, she brightened up a little.

Miss Eddie was in search of Chérie St. Ange. She had gone out early that morning looking ill and worn, telling no one whither she was bound, and had not been seen since. Her prolonged absence alarmed her friends, who knew not what to think of her strange conduct. Mrs. Arden could give Miss Wilton no intelligence. She had not seen Chérie. And Edina went away still more alarmed.

The next day was equally blank: but in the afternoon Major Wilton received a letter bearing the London post-mark from Miss St. Ange, stating that circumstances had arisen which made it desirable she should leave Teddington. She thanked them for their kindness to her, and added that she was in treaty for a situation with some people in a midland county, and begged them to have no concern respecting her future.

This was all.

To Lord Bracker who came over in the evening, they showed the letter; and he was much cut up, not doubting for a moment, that what she considered his cruel letter had been the cause of her sudden flight. He would have given thousands of pounds to find her, set matters right, and openly tell her how much he loved and longed to make her his wife; but she was gone, and he knew not where to find her.

Geoffray Trevellian was equally annoyed and alarmed; he fancied that since there was no chance of his marrying the heiress, Golfer would press him for satisfaction of the judgment he held against him. Nor was he mistaken. Golfer was like a madman, and raved as one out of his senses, demanding his money in a week.

It was out of Trevellian's power to give it to him, but he determined to make an effort to get it. There was a gentleman from whom he had obtained sums of money on several occasions. He was a solicitor, and the legal adviser to Mr. George Styleman Trevellian, who was Geoffray's uncle. Mr. George was not on very friendly terms with Geoffray, who had worn out his patience by appeals for money; but the lawyer knew that Geoffray, at his father's death, was his uncle's heir, and Mr. George Trevellian had no children, consequently he stood a good chance of inheriting his property, which was considerable; and on this chance Mr. Dobson, the solicitor in question, had made the young spendthrift advances from time to time.

It was to Mr. Dobson that Geoffray now went.

Mr. Dobson had chambers, or offices, in Doctors'-commons. His practice was not popularly supposed to be large, but it was known that he had some rich clients, through whose instrumentality he one way and

another put a good deal of money in his pocket. He did not trouble himself much about the petty business of the profession. It was not worth Mr. Dobson's while to make a few shillings now and then by serving writs, and screwing the last pound or so out of a poor fellow who had got out of his depth. He shot his shafts at higher game, and as often as not succeeded in bringing down his quarry. One morning he had arrived at the Commons at his usual time; the clock of St. Paul's struck the hour of ten as he entered one of the devious alleys which lead into the intricacies of the legal warren in which he burrowed during the daytime. He kept two clerks; and although his practice was not very extensive, as we have already hinted, yet he contrived to find something more for them to do than nibbling pens, and spoiling paper by sketching preposterous heads of impossible brigands. The paper of his private room was nearly hidden by an accumulation of black-tin boxes, marked on the outsides with the names of the proprietors, or with inscriptions denoting the corporation or board to which the papers inside appertained. There were two or three tables in the room, which positively groaned beneath the weight of the papers placed upon them. Most of these were discoloured by time and dust, and had a funereal appearance not very interesting to the superficial observer. On his arrival Mr. Dobson sat down and opened his letters. After perusing the contents he replaced the notes, and carefully indorsed the date and the name of the writer on the back of the envelope; then he approached the pile of boxes, and detached one from amongst the rest. It appeared to have been in his office for some considerable time; it was not only dirty and dust-begrimed, but the letters

upon its face were almost obliterated; but after a minute inspection, the words "George Styleman Trevelian" might have been deciphered. When the attorney had succeeded in placing this box on the table, he sat down before it, and surveyed it with a thoughtful air. As he remained for a moment or so steeped in meditation, he presented a singular study for a disciple of Lavater. In person he was short and stout; his face was round, like a turnip or a pumpkin, but it was deeply furrowed with years of care and study. At times, when he was pleasant, it wore what might be called an expression of a ghost of jocularity; but his attempts at mirth were very faint, and, indeed, were usually considered by his friends to be miserable, if not lamentable failures. Presently he undid the box with a key he took from his waistcoat-pocket, and rising from his chair, looked wistfully at the documents which were revealed to his eager gaze. After searching amongst the number displayed before him, he selected three or four, and placed them by his side. There was a musty smell about them, as if they had not been disturbed for a long time. Vampire sorts of moths had made an attempt to devour the corner of one; but apparently finding it unpalatable, they had desisted, for only a fragment was eaten away. Mr. Dobson had hardly arranged the papers before him to his satisfaction, and put the box down upon the carpet by his side, before one of his clerks entered the room, after giving a preliminary knock, and stated that a gentleman wished to see him.

"His name?" demanded Mr. Dobson.

In reply to this query the clerk handed a diminutive card to his master. The tiny bit of pasteboard was gilt

round its edges, and argued well for the affectation of its owner.

"O, Mr. Geoffray Trevellian!" exclaimed Mr. Dobson. "Let him come in."

And as the clerk retired, he disposed himself with a satisfied smile on his rotund countenance to receive his visitor.

When the door again opened, the clerk ushered in a young gentleman about three-and-twenty years of age, dressed in the height of fashion. He was of a light complexion, and his hair was auburn. A delicate moustache had already made its appearance upon his somewhat feminine lip, but whiskers were as yet beyond the reach of his ambition. Our readers have seen him before. He was our friend of the War-office; the money-hunter who wished to marry Chérie St. Ange, the fugitive heiress.

The young man nodded in a careless manner to the attorney, and threw himself into an arm-chair, saying as he did so, "Morning, Dobson; how do you do?"

"Good-morning, Mr. Trevellian: good-morning, sir," said the attorney.

After this mutual greeting there was a pause of a few seconds' duration. It appeared that the tactics of both were identical—the attorney was waiting for his visitor to commence the conversation, while Geoffray was equally desirous that the man of law should begin the verbal skirmish that was about to ensue. Trevellian played with his silken moustache, and stared in a vacant way at the ceiling: the attorney coughed and fidgeted on his chair. At last Mr. Dobson exclaimed,

"You are out betimes, Mr. Trevellian."

"Why, yes," was the reply; "but you are doubtless

aware, Mr. Dobson, that business must be attended to before pleasure."

The attorney rubbed his hands, as if enjoying an excellent joke.

"Certainly, my dear sir, certainly; business before pleasure has always been my motto; was so, sir, when I was a boy that high;" and he indicated about the height of a cubit by placing his hand a certain distance from the floor. "Nothing like it, sir; nothing like it," he added sententiously.

Again there was a pause, but this time of short duration, for the attorney broke the silence by saying, "And what may the business be which has called you out so early this morning, Mr. Geoffray Trevellian."

"Business which you will scarcely be at a loss to guess, I should think."

"Indeed?"

"Come now, Dobson," continued the young gentleman, "you know as well as I do what my business is, so what is the good of beating about the bush?"

"Really," replied the attorney, with an affectation of humility—"really, I must be very dense and stupid to-day, for I cannot, for the life of me, think what you mean by saying that I know the purport of your business with me. You must condescend to be a little more lucid, sir. I am, as you know, only a simple attorney, and do not pretend to be so clever as a fashionable West-end gentleman like yourself."

Geoffray smiled contemptuously at the beginning of this address; but as the lawyer proceeded he made a gesture indicative of impatience, and answered in a voice tinged slightly with annoyance, "Don't talk nonsense, Dobson. What is the use of your telling me that

you are dense and stupid, and only a simple attorney, when everybody knows that you are a deuced clever fellow, and one of the shrewdest in Doctors' Commons and Bedford-row put together."

"Indeed, my dear sir, you flatter me," replied the attorney, looking down at his hands. The immaculate purity of one of his finger-nails was alloyed with a spot of ink, which he began sedulously to wipe off with his pocket-handkerchief. The young man saw from Mr. Dobson's manner that he would have to break the ice himself—the attorney was too clever for him; so he exclaimed,

"Well, Mr. Dobson, suppose we plunge into the middle of the affair at once?"

"By all means."

Geoffray reflected a moment, and then said abruptly,

"How is the money-market this morning?"

"Tight, my dear sir—very tight."

"Hang me if it isn't always tight when I have any interest in its being loose, or whatever the phrase is," replied Trevellian.

"Money never was so scarce as at the present moment," said Mr. Dobson, who appeared to have recovered his volubility all at once: "why they are giving five per cent for good bills in the city—bills which have only ten days to run. Fancy that, my dear sir; five per centum per annum for a ten days' bill! That will give you an idea of the scarcity of the circulating medium. However, I have still some confidence in you, and do not mind letting you have a little more money, and for this reason: your uncle has made his will, and your name is inserted in a corner. I tell you this much, though I am not at liberty to go any further at

present. I may add that your uncle, Mr. George Trevellian, is in a bad state of health, and it will be to your advantage probably to pay him a visit of long or short duration, as your inclination suggests. It is only kind to show some affection for one's relations, especially when they are rich."

Trevellian thanked the attorney heartily for communicating this news, which was very agreeable to him, and promised that he would see his uncle without delay.

"Not a word as to what I have told you," continued Dobson.

"Certainly not. You don't take me for a child?" answered Trevellian. "Your confidence shall be sacred."

The result of his interview with his uncle's solicitor was, that he went away from the office with five hundred pounds in his pocket, hoping to satisfy Golfer with a part of that sum, or at all events to keep him quiet for a time, until some news came of Chérie, and his prospects brightened a little.

On his way back through the City he determined to go through the Temple, which gave him the idea of calling upon his literary friend Jack Easby, whose society he always found entertaining. The fact was, he did not feel in the humour for work that day, and determined to shirk the office, and make some excuse. He was fertile in excuses. Sometimes he was ill; occasionally he had to bury his grandmother or some near relation, though it was suspicious that his relatives generally died on Derby days, or during the Ascot and Goodwood weeks.

Easby had just finished breakfast, and was sitting in an arm-chair before the fire, wrapped in a dressing-

gown, smoking a long pipe, and occasionally referring to piles of papers and letters on a table near him, and jotting-down notes or short sentences on some foolscap paper, with a thick quill pen worn down nearly to a stump.

"Glad to see you!" he cried; "sit down and tell me what you think of this letter I wrote in reply to a Jew, whose money I do him the honour to borrow. He was mortally offended at my having written to him on one of my scraps of paper, and this is my answer:

'I am much concerned to hear that you feel yourself aggrieved at being written to by me on a scrap of paper, and that you think "one gentleman should not write to another in such a circumscribed space."

'I assure you the offence was not intentional, as I am in the habit of writing to men of eminence and position in the same way, and often upon the half-sheet of a note I may have received from them; and I believe they consider that the important part of a letter is its contents, and not the paper upon which it is written. But as it would appear that you have a different opinion, I trust the sheet I am now writing on, will make amends for the grave error into which I have inadvertently fallen.'

"The best of the joke is," continued Easby, "that I have given him a whole sheet of foolscap, and if that does not mollify Mr. Solomon Isaacs, he is implacable, and nothing shall induce me to borrow any more money of him."

Trevellian saw that his friend was busy, and said, "Don't let a drone like me interfere with a busy bee like yourself."

"Not a bit of it!" answered Easby warmly. "I

am glad of your company, though you are right about my being crowded. The truth is, I've put off a lot of work, until I'm literally driven into a corner. I suppose you have not heard that I am the editor of a penny weekly journal. It is a fact though. I have undertaken the editorship of the *Startler*, a national sensational journal of love and crime, for which I used to write, as you know. It gives me a great deal to do, and I have a boy waiting in the next room for copy for the correspondence page. I begin a new tale in the *Startler* directly, and we always announce a tale on the back page before it comes out. What do you think of this by way of a puff?

‘ANOTHER NEW TALE.—Our next number will contain the opening chapters of a new and powerful tale by the author of those much-admired and most extensively circulated novels, *Fashion's Martyr*; *The Mark on the Forehead, or the Brand of Cain*; *Thrice Cursed, or the Grave in the Shifting Sands*. The new tale, entitled *Blissful Belgravia, or the Homes of the Happy*, will—’

“Sorry for the h's of the great unwashed,” said Trevellian.

“‘Will be found,’” continued Easby, “‘to evolve a plot original, subtle, and ingenious. Throughout the prolonged suspense of an exciting love-story and impenetrable mystery, the sympathies of the reader are strongly moved, and almost equally divided between the agonising vacillations of a young wife's suspicions and the terrible trials under which Sebastian Pallfrey suffers. In depth of passion and sentiment nothing can exceed the scenes between Sebastian and the city heiress and her friends; while the pernicious influence of those

baleful feelings, *envy* and *jealousy*, are displayed in the characters of the medical student and Julia. Powerfully picturesque and tragic are the histories of the old diamond-merchant, his wronged and reckless son, and the stern, worldly, treacherous Martha Brock. In short, a better tale does not exist in the English language.

‘Our readers are respectfully invited to make known to their friends the commencement of the new tale in No. 207 of the *Startler*, which they can safely recommend as the best illustrated, the most original, and the most interesting magazine of the day.

‘We may add that the deep love interest of this tale is maintained throughout with great skill and power; while the truthful devotion of the heroine to her false, wild, and erring lover, is unsurpassed for the beauty of its conception and pathos. Full alike of action and of incident, this new tale cannot fail to become very popular with our readers, all of whom are once more most earnestly invited to recommend the *Startler* to their friends, who cannot buy a cheaper or a better weekly companion.’

“If that won’t send us up, nothing will,” concluded Easby.

Trevellian laughed, and said that he agreed with him, and asked what the correspondence he alluded to consisted of.

“O, all sorts of things!” answered Easby; “just look over this, if you can read my writing.”

Trevellian took a couple of slips of paper which Easby offered him, and was much amused at their miscellaneous contents, which were as follows:

“A LONE FEMALE.—You cannot leave as you propose. A notice to quit is necessary, where no certain

time is fixed as the duration of the tenant's term. When the tenant holds for a certain term, on the contrary, no notice is necessary; but he quits on the expiration of that term."

"ADELA.—An *epithalamium* is a poem composed in celebration of a marriage, or a nuptial song. It was a custom among the ancients for such a song to be sung on the occasion of the bride being led to her chamber."

"THOMAS GREEN wants a wife, a sober, steady, and respectable little body, who is good-tempered and domestic, and knows how to keep house for a working man. Address through the Journal, when further particulars will be given."

"G. D. is desirous of making the acquaintance of some of our fair readers, with a view to a future alliance. He is twenty-six years of age, five feet eight inches in height, dark-brown hair, and considered good-looking. He is a mechanic, earning good wages: he is steady and good-tempered, fond of home, and would do his best to make his wife happy. If any lady wishes to reply to the above, she must be kind enough to enclose her *carte* to G. D., General Post-office, Nottingham (till called for)."

"GEORGE BEAUMONT writes as follows: Sir, A friend of mine having obtained a most excellent wife through the medium of your Journal, I wish to appeal to the fair sex, hoping to obtain the same. I am twenty-five years of age, steady, and respectably connected, earning two pounds per week as a mechanic. Having enough at my disposal to start in life, I wish to settle, if I can find a respectable steady young woman whose age is from sixteen to twenty-two, and who is tall and well made. Any one sending her *carte-de-visite* will have it returned at once if not agreeable to G. B. Address,

George Beaumont, Post-office, Westminster-bridge-road, London."

"A WOULD-BE ORATOR.—Eloquence does not always come without practice. The poet may be born a poet, but the orator is as certainly made an orator by careful study, and sometimes hard labour. The celebrated Irish barrister and Master of the Rolls, John Philpot Curran, took pains to attain the eloquence by which he won fame. He debated imaginary cases alone. He recited before a mirror, in order to acquire a graceful style of gesticulation; and he took care to imitate the tone and manner of the most celebrated speakers. The authors from whom he chiefly borrowed the matter of these solitary declamations were Junius and Lord Bolingbroke; and the poet he most passionately admired was Thomson. He also used to declaim occasionally from Milton. One of his favourite exercises was the funeral oration of Antony over the body of Cæsar, as it is given by Shakespeare — the frequent recitation of which he used to recommend to his young friends at the bar to the latest period of his life."

"This is very funny. Is it all genuine?" asked Trevellian.

"O dear, yes," replied Easby, "and I could fill-up the sheet with genuine answers; but I haven't time. Don't you see that heap of letters before me? Well, there are more than a hundred, and the writer of each is waiting for an answer. I have about five hundred a week. To-day I am in such a hurry, I must pad a little."

"What's that?"

"Take a pen and write for me, if you don't mind, and you will find out."

"With pleasure," replied Trevellian, taking up a pen. "Fire away."

Easby had several books before him, one of recipes, a gazetteer, a book of anecdotes, and others. He selected paragraphs from them which he read aloud to Trevellian, prefacing them with names or initials.

"SELINA.—*To remove freckles from the face:* Dissolve in half an ounce of lemon-juice one ounce of Venice soap, and add a quarter of an ounce each of oil of bitter almonds and delignated oil of tartar. Place this mixture in the sun till it acquires the consistency of ointment; when in this state, add three drops of the oil of rhodium, and keep it for use. Apply it to the face in the following manner: Wash the parts at night with elder-flower water: then anoint with the ointment. In the morning cleanse the skin from its oily adhesion by washing it copiously in rose-water.

"HISTRIONICUS.—Garrick's greatness as an actor was as fully recognised during his lifetime as it has been since his death. He was received in the highest society; and tell your *genteel* friends who turn-up their noses at the 'strolling player'—as they are pleased to term him—that to know Mr. Garrick was an honour of which noblemen were proud to boast. He was the friend of Dr. Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Samuel Foote—besides many others whose names are only a little less known than the names of these great stars in the intellectual hemisphere. The following description, by Cumberland, will give some idea of his genius: 'Nature had done so much for him,' writes Richard Cumberland, 'that he could not help being an actor. She gave him a frame of so manageable a proportion, and from its flexibility so perfectly under com-

mand, that by its aptitude and elasticity he could draw it out to fit any surges of character that tragedy could offer to him, and contract it to any scale of ridiculous diminution that his Abel Drugger, Scrubb, or Fribble could require of him to sink it to. His eye, in the meantime, was so penetrating, so speaking, his brow so movable, and all his features so plastic and so accommodating, that wherever his mind impelled them they would go; and before his tongue could give the text, his countenance would express the spirit and the passion of the part he was charged with.' "

"A FATHER OF A FAMILY.—We sympathise with you most sincerely on the crying grievance you write about, and for which it appears there is no remedy, unless the public will be content to live without lamb and veal for three or four years; but it seems that an act of parliament is required to procure this benefit. Our ancestors were wiser in their generation than we are; for, in 1543, a great mortality happening, the chronicler relates, among the cattle, a sumptuary law was made by the Common Council of London to restrain luxurious feasting; wherein it was ordained that the lord mayor should not have more than seven dishes at dinner or supper; aldermen and sheriffs were limited to six, the sword-bearer to four, and the mayor's and sheriff's officers to three, upon penalty of forty shillings for every supernumerary dish. Besides this restriction, they were prohibited, after the ensuing Easter, from buying either swan, crane, or bustard, under a penalty of twenty shillings for each bird. This proceeding is what is vulgarly called 'taking the bull by the horns,' a proceeding, it would be well for us were it followed oftener in our time."

"CLARIBEL.—Dr. Edward Young, the author of *Night-Thoughts*, was for many years rector of Welwyn in Hertfordshire, where he died on Good Friday 1765, and lies buried under the altar, over which is still to be seen a piece of embroidery, the work of his wife, Lady Betty Young, who died many years before her husband."

"PETERKIN.—The oldest tree in the world of which there is any authentic record, is a cypress which stands in Soma, or Somma, in Lombardy, and is said to have been planted in the year of the birth of Jesus Christ; and on this account is treated with great reverence by the inhabitants of the place. The largest tree in the world is a cypress at Chapultepec, in the region of Mexico, which is said to be 117 feet 10 inches round, consisting of only one stem. There are several monster trees in England—the Fairlop Oak, for instance, of Hainault Forest, Essex, which measured, at a yard from the ground, thirty-six feet in girth, and the boughs of which extended about 300 feet in circumference. Fairlop Fair was established on this spot about the year 1720, by Mr. Daniel Day, blockmaker, of Wapping, who gave his men an annual bean-feast under the shade of the oak on the first Friday in July. But, alas for the glory of all earthly things! Mr. Day is dead; his very name forgotten. The fair, once so renowned, has been put down, and the oak that had braved the storms of a thousand winters has long since fallen under the destroying hands of the London roughs who resorted to the fair."

"Have you got all that?" asked Easby.

"Yes," answered Trevellian.

"Thanks. Just add this about a certain mordacious insect which in polite circles is generally nameless, but

which is indigenous to most lodging-houses. It's sure to be welcome to somebody. Head it 'Brutus.' Say Brutus wants to know how

"TO DESTROY BUGS.—Bugs cannot stand hot alum-water. Take two pounds of alum, bruise it, and reduce it nearly to powder: dissolve it in three quarts of boiling water, letting it remain in a warm place till the alum is dissolved. The alum-water is to be applied hot, by means of a brush, to every joint and crevice. Brush the crevices in the floor of the skirting-board if they are suspected places; whitewash the ceiling, putting in plenty of alum, and there will be an end to their dropping from thence."

"That is rather dry, though, coming all together. I must make something up. Write these down, and add a note with three stars for the printer: 'Please scatter the matrimonials and short answers among the fill-up pars.'"

"TULIP.—We think your hair may be pronounced *red*, or at least a very warm auburn. Your writing is good, but not elegant.

"GEORGE ELMORE.—In the present disturbed state of the country we should recommend you to stay at home. A clever and industrious workman need never be long out of employment. Don't be discouraged by a few disappointments. Perseverance in a good cause is sure to meet with success.

"A. B.—To get flowers cheap at Covent-garden market you must be up early in the morning, as the demand for them is very great. The most confirmed sluggard would be rewarded for his sacrifice of sleep by a sight of that glowing picture on a bright May morning."

"There seems to be a lot of work in your paper," remarked Trevellian.

"I should think there was too," replied Easby; "I've been all day at it. There's the 'Sphinx' column—charades, rebuses, arithmorems, and all that; and 'Facetiae,'—I don't know what I should do without the New York papers for that; our comic journals never have anything funny in them,—and 'Household Recipes,' and 'Science,' and 'Poetry;' and, in fact, it's well worth the three pounds a-week I get for it."

"Couldn't you make more at the bar, Jack?" inquired Trevellian.

"I daresay I could; but I want some money to start with. I know I'm selling my birthright for a mess of pottage, but I can't help myself: never mind. Blot that and fold it up for me.—Boy!"

A lad came from the outer room at this summons, and gratefully received the packet for which he had been waiting.

"Now for a pipe," exclaimed Jack gleefully; "that's done, and I can spare a little time. In three days you will see the *Startler* in all the shop-windows, and two-hundred-thousand penny readers will thrill over my *Blissful Belgravia*, in which I try hard to show-up a bloated and tyrannical aristocracy, and elevate the character of the poor but honest artisan and the hard-working but virtuous seamstress, though strongly tempted by the seductive wiles of the wicked Earl of Mountsedgely, and—"

"I say," cried Trevellian deprecatingly, "don't overwhelm me. I'm not used to such tall writing, and it might have an injurious effect upon me."

Jack Easby laughed. They filled their pipes, and disposed themselves for a pleasant chat.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE MONEY WENT.

TREVELLIAN fully intended to devote the money Mr. Dobson had lent him to paying Golfer; but Jack Easby happened to propose a run down to Richmond, and a wind-up afterwards at Maxwellton's in Piccadilly. Here there used to be a little high play three nights during the week; in fact, it was a gambling-house, to which a select circle were admitted. Mr. Maxwellton only entertained those he was personally acquainted with, or those whom his friends could vouch for.

Geoffray had on several occasions won and lost money at Maxwellton's, and the temptation to risk at least a portion of his money was too great to be resisted.

Trevellian had always been fond of gambling. He was first allured into the meshes of the gaming-net by answering the advertisement of an agent for an Austrian government lottery. He bought one hundred shares in it, at a pound apiece, and got fifteen prizes out of his investment—prizes of different values, which altogether brought him in ninety pounds; so, though he did not gain, he did not lose much by the transaction. Afterwards, being fully possessed by the demon of play, he was inveigled by one of his companions into Maxwellton's hell, where the kindred processes of black-legging and gambling were carried on in spite of the exertions of the police. Here a few years ago, whenever he had money, he was to be seen early and late. The fatal vice fascinated his mind, his soul, and obtained sway over his

senses. At first he did not play high. He risked a five-pound note or a few sovereigns, as often winning as losing.

The young men reached the house about ten o'clock, and their faces were flushed with the wine they had imbibed at Richmond.

They took a glance at the table, and walked into an inner room, where they were served with some champagne and a cold woodcock by a waiter in gorgeous livery. No charge was made for this. The profits of the proprietor of the hell were so great that he could afford to be generous in the matter of viands and liquors. Returning after their repast to the gambling-saloon, Trevellian took a chair, and drawing near the table, looked on. Piles of gold and silver caught the eye; and the cupidity of the beholder was further increased by the spectacle of thick rolls of notes which were displayed here and there within reach of the croupier's rake. That night Trevellian had a fancy for a particular colour; the game happening to be the old one of red and black. On different evenings they played different games. In the beginning of the week it would be *trente et quarante*; in the middle, *hazard*, when you would hear the familiar exclamation, "Seven's the main," as the favourite number was called out; and at the end, that is, Saturday, *rouge et noir* would solicit the attention of the patrons of the place. Geoffray watched and watched the game with a critical and calculating eye for a long time without risking the smallest piece of gold; but at length he could resist the temptation no longer. He thought that a favourable opportunity presented itself, and he determined to try his luck. Red had been the winning colour, to the confusion of many, for upwards of twenty times,

which was very unusual, although not unprecedented. So he resolved to back the black.

He said nothing to Easby, who stood at the back of his chair, and looked over his shoulder with profound interest.

Trevellian had the five hundred pounds which he had received from the attorney in his pocket, partly in gold, partly in notes. Taking it out of his purse, he laid it on the table before him, and staked twenty pounds on black.

Several other players seemed to be of his way of thinking, and they ventured larger sums on the same colour.

Slowly the machine revolved. Eagerly the spectators awaited the result. At last it came. They lost! Red again asserted its sway, and the money was raked in by the proprietors of the bank, which from its solid appearance seemed to defy breaking.

The next time Trevellian doubled his stake; but luck was evidently against him, for he lost again.

The other spectators changed their tactics; they thought that red was the proper colour to back, and transferred their allegiance to it.

Trevellian had now lost sixty pounds; but he determined to be staunch to the cause he had first espoused.

This time he ventured eighty pounds; and waited with a beating heart to know whether he was more successful than before.

No! Red was a third time triumphant. This increased his loss to one hundred and forty pounds; consequently he had but three hundred and sixty left. But that was ample to go on with. He reasoned that black must eventually turn up, and then he would regain all

he had lost. So he risked double what he had already sunk.

Two hundred and eighty pounds now glittered on the board. If he lost this time, he had not enough left with which to retrieve his loss, according to the tactics he had been pursuing. It was an anxious moment with him, and he turned a shade paler as he awaited his fate.

Black seemed to be abandoned by all the players but himself; he was the sole exception to the general rule.

Jack Easby touched him on the shoulder, and advised him to turn his luck; but he resolutely refused to listen to him.

It was fortunate that he did so. Had he not turned a deaf ear to his advice, he would have lost all his money, with the exception of the few pounds that yet remained.

Black turned up, and he received the sum of two hundred and eighty pounds, which made him a considerable winner. Feeling an inward conviction, as some gamblers often declare they do, that his "run" had now commenced, Trevellian left the whole of his stake upon the board, and backed black to win for five hundred and sixty pounds. It was a large sum, and few men in his position would have been rash enough to do it.

Seeing that high play was commencing, and anticipating some excitement, numbers of idlers round the room collected near the table to watch the game.

Most of the small players now left off. It was an understood thing that when a man won a large sum, and risked it with double its amount, he intended to try and break the bank.

To the dismay of the proprietors of the bank, Trevellian was successful a second time. Luck seemed to

have set in his favour. Eleven hundred and twenty pounds now was his. It was a tempting prize ; and he felt more than half-inclined to take it, put it in his pocket, and walk out of the hell a richer man than he came in. But the demon of greed and gain whispered his fell and evil promptings in his ear, and he left it on the baize.

“Do you back the black ?” inquired the croupier.

Trevellian replied in the affirmative: and with breathless expectation all awaited the result.

Trevellian was terribly excited: his eyes were hot, red, and bloodshot. He called for a flagon of wine, which an obsequious footman instantly brought him. Draining the silver cup to the dregs, he threw it into a corner ; and leaning his face on his hands, and his elbows on the table, waited for what was to come next.

“Black again !” was the cry ; and with rapturous delight Geoffray Trevellian found himself the lucky possessor of two thousand two hundred and forty pounds.

Every one of those he knew and those he did not know now began to take a sudden and particular interest in him ; they began to see a chance of borrowing an occasional fifty, or of driving down to Greenwich or to Richmond, and having a dinner at the expense of the lucky speculator. They one and all urged him to give up play and come away ; but the demon of obstinacy possessed him, and he refused to move.

“Will the gentleman play again ?” said the croupier blandly.

“Yes,” replied Trevellian, with a wild laugh ; and he once more risked his large winnings.

The anxiety this time was much more intense than before ; and numerous bets were made in the room.

He called for more wine. His head was throbbing fiercely, and his throat was parched; a single cup was to him, in his then state, but as a drop in the ocean.

Maxwelton, the proprietor of the bank, began to look gloomy and apprehensive; but the oily smile of the croupier, as he sat passive and immobile with his delicate wooden rake in his hand, was as impassible as ever.

A shout suddenly arose from those assembled—Trevellian had won once more.

"I play again," cried Trevellian, with the utmost firmness and determination.

A murmur of applause at his courage ran round the room. Very few of those assembled would have done what he was going to do.

Four thousand four hundred and eighty pounds was now the sum to be gambled for; and the bank proprietor turned a shade paler as he contemplated the risk he was running.

Trevellian trembled all over. The croupier on the contrary was perfectly cool; he seemed in his element.

Pushing his chair back, Trevellian rose to his feet and paced the apartment with rapid strides. If any one spoke to him, he answered them sharply; and they gave up the attempt at conversation with disgust, if not in despair.

At last, leaning against a handsome piece of furniture in an obscure corner of the room, he was aroused by a shout; hands grasped him convulsively and dragged him to the table.

"Fortune smiles upon you, sir," exclaimed the croupier. "Are you willing to tempt her still further?"

A huge mass of money now lay before Trevellian,

amounting in all to eight thousand nine hundred and sixty pounds.

"Yes," replied he, mechanically.

"Very well."

Again the game proceeded, and the most apathetic came out of the supper-room and looked on.

It was very exciting.

Even those who were not in the least interested in the result held their breath and bit their lips. Trevelian himself buried his face in his hands, and beat the devil's tattoo on the carpet with his restless feet.

As before, he was a winner; and he was now the undisputed possessor of the handsome amount of seventeen thousand nine hundred and twenty pounds.

The proprietor of the bank reflected a moment; and at last, by Mr. Maxwellton's orders, the croupier declared the bank broken for the evening. Fifteen thousand was the usual amount they risked, and they had already exceeded that by some thousands.

A scene of the wildest confusion now ensued. People walked about the room as if they had gone mad; and nothing was spoken of but the extraordinary luck which had fallen to the lot of Geoffray Trevellian. Jack Easby was beside himself with delight, and danced about like a madman, singing a song of his own composition which had the week before appeared in the *Startler*.

But though the bank was broken, there was a man who was willing to back it, and he proposed to Maxwellton that he should stand in his place, and that the play should continue. This man was not known to anybody, but he had money with him, and Maxwellton cheerfully agreed that he should occupy the place of the

banker, and privately made a bargain that if he won, he should have a percentage on his gains. When Trevellian was asked if he would go on, he at once consented; for, like most gamblers, he did not know when to leave off.

Easby was in despair; he would have gladly got him by main force out of the room; but it was not Mr. Maxwelton's intention to let him depart so easily. The presumption in Easby's mind was, that the strange man was an accomplice of Maxwelton's; but Trevellian did not for a moment suspect such a thing.

The man approached the table as those around made room for him. Then he produced a roll of bank-notes, carefully counted them, and handed them to the manager of the bank to inspect. This functionary took them in his hands, looked at the water-mark, and otherwise critically examined them, and pronounced them, as far as his knowledge went in such articles, to be perfect. But he nevertheless said,

"As this gentleman—"

"Mr. Trevellian," said Easby.

"I was going to observe," continued the manager, "that as Mr. Trevellian and yourself did not seem to be acquainted with one another, you would have no objection to lodge your card with me. I hope you will not think I mean to offend you in any way; but I have not seen your face in this room before."

Trevellian during this discussion seemed cordially to approve of the precautionary measures the manager was anxious to adopt.

"This gentleman and myself may have met before," he said; "but I am not aware that we have done so. If, however, such should be the case, it is no good and sufficient reason why he should refuse to give you his

card if you wish for it. You are the manager of the bank, and ought to be better acquainted with the rules of the establishment than I am myself. But I can only say for myself, that if I were asked for my card, I should be very glad to give it."

"Certainly," said every one in chorus. The sense of the bystanders was evidently with Trevellian and the manager of the bank.

"Have you any objection to do as I had the honour of requesting you just now?" blandly asked the manager of the unknown.

For a moment a shade came over the face of the man ; but almost instantly recovering his serenity, he replied,

"I have no objection whatever. If I hesitated before, it was because I have not a card in my pocket. But I will soon give you my name and address on a piece of paper."

A slip was handed to him, and a servant despatched for an inkstand ; but the unknown exclaimed,

"It is not necessary ; I always carry one about with me."

As he spoke he produced a small bottle covered with green morocco. It opened with a snap as he pressed a spring. A pen was given him : he dipped it in the ink, and hastily wrote something, which he doubled up and gave to the manager, who, without looking at it, placed it upon his desk, bowed to the unknown, and requested silence, as the game was about to begin. Trevellian looked the incarnation, the personification, of anxiety and expectation. The man, on the contrary, was calmly confident. A smile of sinister import flitted over his countenance, and he took a seat opposite Trevellian with all the coolness imaginable. Most men would have trem-

bled in spite of themselves at the chance of losing so much money; but he never moved a muscle or allowed a pulse to quiver.

Slowly the game began, and even the hardened bank people took an unwonted interest in a contest of such magnitude. Trevellian's breath came short and quick, and he occasionally glared at his opponent as if he could have killed him in the chair he occupied.

The issue of the contest was just what might have been expected. Trevellian's luck deserted him, and in less than an hour he had lost every penny he had won and all he had with him besides. Whether fraud was used or not he could not say. The shock thus given to his nervous system was so great, that, overcome by excitement and emotion, he lost his senses. When he came to himself, he looked wildly around and staggered to his feet. Most of the company had departed; and seeing his ill luck, not one of his friends, with the exception of Easby, remained to solace him in his disappointment.

As soon as he could collect his scattered senses, he ran to the manager, who was in deep conference with his associates as to the losses the bank had met with that evening. They had not suffered so severely as they had anticipated: for the man who had won so largely, previous to his departure, had said to them,

"I cannot stop this evening to continue the game, as is, I believe, the custom; but I am willing to give you something by way of compensation. Here are notes to the amount of seven thousand pounds; that is nearly half of what I have won. Money is not such an object to me as it is to you."

This was a wise precaution on his part, and he knew

it; for there were men downstairs who would have opposed his exit and considerably lightened his purse, had he not conciliated the powers above. This he was aware of; and having given them a very respectable tithe of what he possessed, he was allowed to depart freely and in peace.

Catching hold of the manager's arm, Trevellian excitedly said,

"The card!—the card! Where is it?"

"What card?" demanded the manager.

"The stranger's—the address he gave you. That of the man who I believe has robbed me. I must have it!"

"Certainly; it is of no use to me. Where did I put it? O, here it is."

Taking it up from off his desk, the manager gave it to Trevellian. It was a plain piece of note-paper folded in half.

He hastily undid it. He gazed upon it with blank amazement. His head swam. It was destitute of any writing whatever. He had been duped. It was written in invisible ink, which, once dry and faded, is gone for ever.

CHAPTER XI.

WITH NEW FRIENDS.

It was with difficulty Jack Easby got Trevellian home to his lodgings. Bitterly he regretted his folly in playing with a man who was evidently a sharper; though how his fraud was managed no one knew. But regrets were useless.

He was ill for several days. Golfer pressed for his

money; and Trevellian, driven to despair, left the War-office without saying a word to any one, thereby risking his appointment, and went straight away to his uncle in Warwickshire, who resided at a charming place near Nunninton, called Binnethorpe Hall.

Mr. George Styleman Trevellian received his nephew Geoffray very kindly, and declared it was good of him to pay him a visit; to do which Geoffray said he had obtained leave, and forbore to mention the desperate state of his affairs.

We must leave him here, while we follow the fortunes of Chérie St. Ange, who, in order to get away from London, had accepted the (to her) novel position of governess in a farmer's family near Nunninton. Oddly enough, the farmer, whose name was Garraway, was a tenant of Mr. George Styleman Trevellian; so fate brought Geoffray within a short distance of the girl upon whom he thought all his future prospects depended. Such was one of the strange occurrences with which this life is replete.

Mr. and Mrs. Garraway occupied Woodhouse Farm. Thomas Garraway was a steady, industrious man, and put by a little money, which he had been enabled to save by a life of frugality and labour. He did not save because he was fond of money for money's sake, and would have laughed at the accusation that he was a miser, as something too ridiculous to be entertained for an instant. Farmer Thomas Garraway knew the uncertainty of human existence; he had a wife and two daughters entirely dependent upon his forethought and exertions, who would, if he died suddenly, be cast upon the hard mercy of the world unless he provided for them in some manner.

It was a hard thing for Farmer Thomas Garraway to save money. When he had paid his rent, and taken stock, and settled all little outstanding obligations against him, he was not much in pocket; for his landlord was a man who extracted every penny he could from his tenants; would make no improvements on the land, until the want and need of them was so disgracefully apparent that he could with decency refuse no longer; and, to his great unpopularity, went upon the principle that a working-man is, and should be, kept as a slave; discountenanced the allotment-system; would never give a lease, because he liked to have a man in his power, which must be the case when he is a tenant-at-will; and behaved with such tyrannical *hauteur*, and such a want of generosity generally, that the name of Trevellian became a by-word and a reproach to all who thought that something besides money is required to make a gentleman. His nephew, people said, was an apt pupil of his worthy uncle, and followed so closely in his footsteps that he showed the force of example was not lost on him; and became in a few weeks scarcely less detested in the vicinity of Nunninton than was the squire.

Farmer Thomas Garraway was often asked by those who knew him best, and who could take the liberty of questioning him upon so delicate a subject, why a practical farmer, such as he undoubtedly was, put up with the domineering conduct of his landlord and the onerous conditions of his tenancy. To this he made one invariable reply. He had lived for years upon the farm; his youngest daughter had been born there, both his children had been brought up there, and the spot was endeared to him by many pleasant recollections. The house was built in a pleasant, well-wooded valley,

through which a small stream, called the Anchor, flowed. It was dignified with the name of a river; but had it at any time or by any chance been confronted with the Amazon, St. Lawrence, or Mississippi, it would have hid its head for very shame. Still, the Anchor was a pleasant stream, and its bright pellucid waters flowed down from the hills and sparkled clear in the sunlight, while the speckled trout leaped and dashed in the circling eddies: and in winter the water overflowed the high banks, and spread like a sheet of glass over the low-lying meadows and helped to fertilise the land, which was heavy with the rich grass-crop.

Geoffray Trevellian was not conciliatory to any with whom he came in contact; for he was much irritated by the condition of his affairs in town, and did not care at any time to conciliate inferiors.

As week after week passed, and he did not return to the War-office, his uncle wondered; but Geoffray gained his good-will for ever by saying that he would risk the continuance of his appointment, as he saw he was not in very strong health, and that his society was pleasing to him.

The daughters of farmer Garraway were named respectively Amanda and Jane, and the two girls had very different dispositions, tastes, and ideas. We shall describe them separately. Amanda was tall, dark, and handsome, her features were regular and interesting, the nose straight and Grecian; her black flashing eyes, full and lustrous, commanded the attention and enchained the admiration of the observer, for they were full of a scornful pride, and ambition lurked in their inscrutable depths. Her father was very proud of her accomplishments; he had sent her to a boarding-school,

where she learnt French, and was taught to play the piano,—acquirements of little use to a girl in her position, and which gave her ideas far above her station. When she left school, at the age of eighteen, she came home, her head filled with high-flown notions, and speedily became discontented with her lot, flatly refusing to go into the dairy and the kitchen, regarding domestic work as beneath her dignity, looking upon herself as a young lady who was cruelly treated, because she was unable to assume that place in society for which her education fitted her. What money she could induce her father and mother to bestow upon her, and the sums were not small, she spent in dress, for the endowment of her person was with her the first law of nature, and she was never so well satisfied as when her elegant figure was set-off to the best advantage in a dress of the newest fabric and latest fashion. She was a regular subscriber to the circulating library at Nunninton, and early imbibed romantic ideas about love and marriage. At church she was a constant attendant, not because her religious principles were firm and of a high order, but for the reason that she could there display her finery to the best advantage, and see and be seen by the principal people in the parish and neighbourhood.

It was for Amanda that Mr. Garraway had engaged Chérie St. Ange as a finishing governess, thinking that the girl, when old enough and qualified, would best consult her interests by obtaining the position of instructress in some good family.

Jane, her sister, had a pretty face, but its expression was serious, if not sad. She was a hard worker, and her disposition was generous and cheerful; but the actual business of life took up all her time and atten-

tion, so that she seldom had time even to laugh, and Amanda said that she was usually too busy to smile. Mr. Garraway was getting old and could not bustle about much, so the management of the dairy and the poultry-yard fell to Jane's share. She made capital butter and good cheese, and her careful management of these two branches of farm industries, helped her father materially when quarter-day came round. Jane lay under one misfortune, which, however, was not a very serious drawback to her. The nurse had let her fall when an infant, and injured her so severely, that a permanent lameness in the right foot was the lamentable result. This made her carriage a little awkward, but it seemed to have redoubled her industries, and perhaps inculcated in her mind a humble and submissive spirit, which made her contented with her fate in life. She was a general favourite with every one, and with one person in particular. This was John Short, who had openly expressed his affection for Jane for some time. She had not the brilliant parts of her sister Amanda. If she could read, and write, and calculate, it was all she could boast of being able to do; nevertheless her bills were well made out and legible, if they were not written in a fine, running, Italian hand; and she rarely made a mistake in her arithmetic. John Short wanted a good, loving, affectionate wife, who could make herself useful and would attend to him, his house, and his children, and he very wisely thought that he might go farther afield and fare worse, than he should with Jane Garraway; so, in spite of her lameness, he made love to her, and the farmer approved strongly of the courtship.

John Short was a small tradesman, who had a baker's shop at the entrance to Nunninton, and did a

good business. The river ran at the bottom of his garden, and he was only waiting for a slight addition to his capital to build a mill, and utilise the water-power so as to grind his own flour. There were several ambitious, useful, and money-making projects in John's long head, and it was predicted that he would become a rich man. In person he was short and thickset, and his best friends could not compliment him on his beauty; but his heart was in the right place, and a more sober, honest, industrious fellow, was not to be met with miles round.

One evening, about two months after Chérie St. Ange's arrival at the farm, the family sat round the huge kitchen fireplace, occupying themselves in various ways. Mrs. Garraway looked after a large tin saucepan, which contained a savoury mess for the evening meal. Amanda was engaged in the congenial pursuit of novel-reading. Jane was busily stitching, as if her life depended upon her exertions. Chérie St. Ange was talking to the farmer. Without, the cold and boisterous northerly wind howled and roared in wanton fury, making those within doors consider the fire a greater luxury than usual, and thank their stars that they were under shelter, and could enjoy a comfortable home, while they pitied the houseless wanderer, compelled to beg from door to door for a scanty subsistence, which, at the best, only enabled him to keep body and soul together.

Farmer Garraway was talking about Mr. Trevellian his landlord, who had lately made an attempt, in some cases successfully, to raise the rents of his tenants. Rumour, as usual in such cases, was rife, and the cause alleged was a miserly fondness for money; others said that Mr. Trevellian was obliged to pay several thousand pounds for his nephew, which this young gentleman owed to tradesmen at London.

The exploits of Mr. Geoffray Trevellian since his arrival at Binnethorpe Hall had not been of a character to conciliate the good opinion of the tenantry, or win him the esteem of the country side. He had ridden recklessly across country, regardless of the growing crops. He declared that no rabbits should be shot; and prosecuted with relentless rigour a poor man, the father of a family, who was found with a hare in his possession.

He was insolent in his manner to all who paid his uncle rent, as if he thought the act in itself made them inferior, and he would permit no one to remonstrate with him. On one occasion he had severely horse-whipped a lad who told him that some birds he was shooting were tame pigeons; and he recklessly rode over an aged woman, who either refused, or was not nimble enough, to get out of his way in a narrow lane.

Amanda had seen the young squire, as he was called, at church, whither she had accompanied her mother. Jane, like Martha in Scripture history, was worried with much serving, and could seldom spare time to attend divine worship. She said, with some justice, that if a dinner was to be cooked, some one must look after it, and she would not throw the burden upon her old mother. Geoffray Trevellian, as our readers know, was tall and very good-looking, at least Amanda thought so when she found his burning gaze fixed intently upon her more than once during the service, and she went away bearing well in mind a faithful remembrance of his chestnut hair, bright blue eyes, brown moustache, and his gentlemanly bearing, which she, in her simplicity, did not think suffered from the somewhat impudent stare with which he had favoured her.

Chérie St. Ange was a Catholic, and as there was

no church of her persuasion nearer than Nunninton, she did not often attend divine worship. As yet she had seen nothing of Geoffray Trevellian, nor did she think much of him. Her mind was filled with bitter reflections respecting the letter she fancied Lord Bracken had sent her, and until the receipt of which she did not know how dear he was to her. Since she had been at the farm she had tried to forget him. But had she succeeded? Her heart could only answer that question.

It was a pleasant sight to see the farmer and his family circle grouped round the fire, which leaped and twisted in the grate, the eager flames licking the huge logs greedily, and casting a ruddy glare upon the countenances exposed to it. Suddenly a knocking was heard at the door; not a quiet, subdued knock, such as a tramp, beggar, or ordinarily well-behaved belated traveller would give, but an imperious thumping, varied occasionally by an energetic kick. The girls left off reading, working, and talking. Mrs. Garraway stood with the saucepan-lid, which she had just removed, in her hand, and in an attitude of expectation: while the farmer, marvelling much who his late and noisy visitor might be, walked across the kitchen floor and threw wide open the door. The rough and stormy wind beat in with a violence which extinguished the candle on the table, but this mattered little, as the fire-light was strong and vivid, and sufficient to enable every one to behold the new-comer, who, crossing the threshold, looked round him with an air of either impertinent curiosity or astonishment; it was difficult to tell which. The farmer closed the door again, to shut out the wind; Jane lighted the candle; and every one waited for the stranger to speak, which he was not slow in doing.

CHAPTER XII.

IT WAS THEIR FATE.

CHERIE ST. ANGE turned very pale, and stared rather rudely at the intruder upon their privacy.

The person who had applied for and obtained admittance to the hospitable dwelling of Farmer Garraway was apparently a young gentleman. His face was undoubtedly handsome, though many would have objected to its wild, reckless, defiant expression, which seemed to cast the gauntlet down to all laws, human and divine. When he left home he might have been well dressed. Now it was almost impossible to tell the colour and cut of his clothes, as he was covered with mud and dirt, his coat was torn in more than one place, and his hat had suffered severely, being seriously indented and crushed.

"Perhaps," he exclaimed, "some of you will be good enough to tell me where I am, as I have lost my way in this winding valley. I knew I ought to bear for the north to reach the place I wanted to get to, but the river met me at every turn, and there was no bridge, and—excuse me, but it might have occurred to some of you that I was tired with walking, and that to offer me a chair would be an act of necessary civility."

"I am not in the habit of asking people with whom I am unacquainted to sit down at my fireside," answered the farmer with dignity. "You knocked at my door, and I admitted you; but I am therefore under no obligation to ask you to stay. If you request permission in a becoming manner to warm yourself, and would care for a mug of ale, I am your humble servant. I will not,

though, give as a right that which can only be sought as a favour."

"Indeed," cried the stranger somewhat haughtily. "Suppose, my good man, that I have as much or more right here than you. But I'll mystify you no longer; and since I see several pretty faces before me, I'll not quarrel with you, though you are enough to provoke a saint, which, thank goodness, I am not. You are curious to know what and who I am. It's no great secret, and I wonder you have not guessed before that—"

He broke off abruptly, and going towards Chérie St. Ange, held out his hand, saying, "This is indeed strange. Can it be you? How was it I did not see you before?"

"I thought it was you, Mr. Trevellian," she answered, "though I had some difficulty in recognising you with your torn clothes and the splashes of mud on your face."

"Add to that, my disreputable appearance generally," exclaimed the young man laughing. "But this young lady is right, farmer. I'm Geoffray Trevellian, your landlord's son, and glad to make your acquaintance. Make room for me, if you can, by the fire, for the wind has chilled me to the bone; and when I have had some of the ale you spoke of, I'll tell you how I came into the state in which you see me. It's odd that I should have lost myself, for I have ridden all over the valley, and fished in the stream. The land all belongs to my uncle, and yet I was ignorant of the existence so near to me of the three graces it is now my good fortune to meet."

"You appear to know Miss St. Ange, sir," said Garraway.

"We have met before," he replied cautiously. "Get

the beer, my friend, the beer, and then we will have a little farther conversation."

The farmer placed a chair for the young squire, and went through the back kitchen to the cellar, to draw a jug of fine sparkling October ale, his own brewing, the excellence of which he could vouch for. Amanda returned Geoffray's amorous glance in her direction with a supercilious stare, and taking up her book went on reading; a proceeding which piqued the young squire considerably. Jane had already busied herself with her everlasting needlework. Chérie alone remained idle as a butterfly, and to her Trevellian addressed his regards and his conversation, dividing his attention between her and the farmer and his family.

If his manner was a little less conciliatory than it might have been, if he was proud and haughty, and did not look with kindly feeling upon those inferior to him, perhaps the fault was in his education and the associations of his daily life. He did not know the meaning of poverty. Suffering had always been absent from his home. He derived enjoyment from existence, and if he did not realise his ideal in every way, he was nevertheless indefatigable in his endeavours to render himself happy.

It was with something like contempt, not unmingled with wonder, that he examined the room in which he found himself, which the farmer and his wife thought such a miracle of good taste and neatness. The tawdry German prints, in colours, which hung on the walls, he turned from with horror; they contrasted so strangely, to his cultivated taste, with the masterpieces of ancient and modern art with which the house of his uncle abounded. The members of the farmer's family who

had called in the aid of the photographer to perpetuate their faces were not remarkable for their beauty, and when he came to the row of family portraits, he smiled again.

Certainly the room was clean, for the family were avowed enemies to dirt, but that was all that could be said in its favour. There was more furniture in it than it could properly hold, and that was badly arranged; while the dull level of inferiority was not relieved by a single shrub or flower, and rather aggravated than not by a few branches of artificial roses and chrysanthemums—an odd mixture—which were stuck in hideous vases, such as dealers in old clothes exchange for left-off articles of wearing-apparel.

“Capital beer,” he said, as he drained glass number two, with a deep sigh of satisfaction. “I begin to feel better than I have done since I was assaulted. You must know that I went out shooting this afternoon, and had such miserable sport, that I could have shot a cock-sparrow for the sake of letting my gun off. Well, I came to the river, and on the chance of meeting with a snipe or a moor-hen, I followed it up nearly to Nunninton. Not a feather could I see until I came to some remarkably fine ducks. Not knowing, or, for the matter of that, caring much, who they belonged to, I fired away at them, knocking them right and left, and killing I daresay half-a-dozen. This innocent amusement—for which, mind you, I was fully prepared to pay—was not allowed to continue. An ugly man, who to the repulsiveness of his personal appearance added the roughest and most disagreeable manner I ever remember to have met with, walked down a bit of garden ground which seemed to belong to him, and attacked me in violent language for

killing the ducks, which he claimed as his property. If he had spoken civilly, I should have paid him whatever he asked; but as he was abusive, I told him I would take care he was punished for his insolence. To my surprise he broke down the bough of a pollard willow, stripped it of its leaves, and, seizing me in a grasp like a vice, belaboured me till I thought he would break every bone in my body. He tore my clothes, rolled me in the mud, and when I escaped from his murderous clutches, and ran for my life, he gave chase, pursuing me until a fog began to rise from the lowlands, and I lost my way in the valley."

"Rather rough treatment," said farmer Garraway; "though I must admit that you went far to deserve it. I wonder who the man was. There is but one that I can think of who keeps ducks, and that is John Short. If it was he, I'd warrant he'd belabour you soundly; for honest John's no respecter of persons, and if a king's son did not know how to behave himself, and ran foul of John, he'd teach him."

"My position and that of my uncle in the county have to be vindicated," replied Trevellian flushing angrily. "Surely the law will protect me, and I will prosecute him with the utmost rigour. I would not soil my hands by fighting a low-bred fellow such as he is. When he finds himself in prison, he will regret that he acted so hastily. I appeal to these young ladies if I have not been treated badly."

"If you ask me," said Amanda, "I must tell you that I was not aware you were justified in considering domestic birds game; and if they were not game or wild fowl, you had no business to shoot them. I do not approve of the rough usage you received; but in my opinion

you were both to blame. It's a disgraceful affair, and the less that is said about it the better."

Trevellian bit his lips. The farmer's girls, whom he had dignified with the title of young ladies to conciliate them, were not so much impressed with his position as he thought they ought to have been; but he was slightly consoled when Chérie observed that she looked upon him as the victim of cruel usage; and that, for her part, she would never speak to John Short again, if he were the offender, for having recourse to such extreme measures on account of the loss of a few paltry ducks.

They had scarcely finished speaking, when a quick footstep was heard outside, followed by a sharp rat-tat, similar to that of the postman. Jane flew to the door, for she knew it was the usual knock of her lover; and when the door swung back on its well-oiled hinges, John Short, wrapped in a thick greatcoat and having a muffler round his neck, stepped in and, bending down, kissed Jane tenderly. He was about to go forward and shake hands with the other members of the family, when his eye rested on Geoffray Trevellian, and he halted abruptly.

The astonishment noticeable in his face was almost comical in its intensity. He looked and looked again, thinking that, as he had just come out of the darkness and mist of the night, he might be mistaken. Trevellian had risen as John Short entered, and his eyes were riveted upon him with equal fixity and attention. The farmer looked from one to the other for an explanation, which he really did not stand in need of, for he guessed already the nature of the scene which he expected would ensue. It was clear to the most limited comprehension that John was the man who had taken the law into his

own hands, and beaten Mr. Trevellian for killing his poultry. The meeting was a singular one; and it rejoiced the farmer's heart he had treated Trevellian with a reluctant civility, and for this reason: he had heard of his licentious character, and did not wish him to make the acquaintance of his daughters. They were no match for a man in Mr. Trevellian's position. Though he had heard frequent instances of girls lowly born being raised by marriage into high positions; still his common sense told him that they were more likely to be truly happy in their own condition of life, with a congenial helpmate.

Again, he feared that a young man of Mr. Trevellian's character might think it good sport to talk empty words of love, which would turn the head and win the heart of a farmer's daughter. Visions of splendour and a round of amusements would contrast to the disadvantage of a steady plodding life of hard work and monotonous routine on the farm. He was delighted when Amanda replied so boldly; and he trembled with a secret dread when Chérie, who was under his roof, and consequently under his protection, invented excuses for the audacity of the young man.

The latter took the initiative, exclaiming: "I claim your protection, farmer, against this ruffian, who is the man I have been so grossly ill-used by. It grieves me to find that he is a friend of yours, as I had intended to mention you favourably to my uncle, the consequences of which might have been the granting of a lease, which I know is what you fellows are all clamouring for, and certain improvements might have been made upon the farm, which would, I have little doubt, have been acceptable to you."

"Thank you all the same, squire," answered farmer

Thomas Garraway: "I am not to be bribed into doing an act of injustice. John Short here is a friend of mine, and I'm proud to say it. I could not have a higher opinion of him than I possess; and I'm bound to say that what he has done to you to-day has not lessened him in the slightest degree in my esteem."

"O, very well," returned Trevellian contemptuously; "I might have expected this. You sort of people always hang together, and I perfectly understand you. Of course you cannot imagine that I shall stay here after you have so warmly espoused the cause of my enemy, who you would instantly turn out of doors if you had a proper regard for your own interest, and a due sense of the respect which you owe to the nephew of your landlord."

John Short was about to speak, when Garraway interrupted him, saying,

"Take a seat, John; leave me to finish this matter. I know all about your quarrel with Mr. Trevellian, and though I don't say you were not a little hasty, I don't blame you. Now, sir," he added, turning to the young man, "I must tell you that you presume too much upon the accident of birth which has placed you in your present position; and you are wrong to despise any man because he gets his living by the sweat of his brow. The wheel of fortune may turn and put you at its bottom; and if you should ever be reduced to poverty, which is not by any means impossible, you will understand the full force of my words. I don't want to lecture you; but I cannot submit to an insult, even from the nephew of my landlord"—here he employed a sarcastic emphasis—"without giving him what seems to me a suitable reply. Common people, as you call us, have their feelings; and

the day has long since passed when the gentry of the country can treat those beneath them as slaves. I should be glad, indeed, if I could reconcile you and Mr. Short—”

“Don’t waste your breath in the attempt,” angrily responded Trevellian. “I am very sorry that my wandering footsteps should have brought me into the house in which my uncle foolishly allows you to live. I look upon you as an accomplice of this man Short; and when I complain to the proper authorities, I shall see if some severe measures cannot be taken with you, to let you know the respect you should pay to your betters.”

Garraway smiled. His quiet, majestic, calm look became his venerable appearance, and presented a pleasant contrast to the impetuous manner of the hot-headed youth who threatened him in such an unseemly manner.

“If there is anything that my poor house affords of which you are in need, do not forget to ask for it. I cannot allow myself to look upon you as a total stranger, as you have claimed my hospitality,” continued the farmer. “I will call one of my men from the stables, who, with a lantern, shall show you the way to the hall, and—”

“Thank you,” answered Geoffray Trevellian coldly; “I will put myself under no farther obligation to you. The way is not difficult, and I will trust to fortune and my knowledge of locality. I wish you a good evening; and can only blame myself for expecting manners and good-breeding where I had no right to look for them.”

He bowed, and the farmer, with a politeness which had nothing of obsequiousness in it, opened the door for him to pass out. Short took no notice of him. Chérie alone looked after him; and he, with a motion so quick

that it escaped the notice of all save her for whom it was intended, kissed his hand as a token that he was in no way offended with her, though he had such serious cause of complaint against the other members of the farmer's family.

When he was gone, Mrs. Garraway laid the cloth and served up the supper, of which all partook. The subject of conversation was, of course, the conduct of the young man. John Short, who was an independent Radical, justified his own behaviour, and he had all but Chérie with him. The farmer commended him warmly. They laughed at Trevellian's threats; but they did not know the full extent to which a vindictive and unscrupulous nature was capable of going, nor the influence he wielded over his weak and impulsive uncle.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEHIND HIS BACK.

TREVELLIAN was afraid to say much to Chérie before the farmer and his family. He was, of course, rejoiced to meet her again, and determined that he would seek an interview with her, and do all he could to prejudice her against Lord Bracken; for the story of the letters had oozed out at Teddington, and he guessed that she preferred his lordship to any one else, until she fancied he had treated her badly.

He was really angry with John Short, for no man likes to be knocked about with a stick and rolled in the mud; and thinking the man too big to fight, he resolved

to punish him by the aid of the law. He was also aware that the farmer regarded Chérie St. Ange as a member of his family circle. Perhaps she was a relation; and if he did not mind what he was about, he might receive a second castigation; for he had already—short though his stay had been at Binnethorpe Hall—established a reputation in his behaviour to women, which would justify any prudent man in closing his doors against him.

His first act was to go to law with John Short, who was fined for the assault in a mitigated penalty, on account of the provocation and the loss of the ducks, which had to be paid for by the young man, whose behaviour throughout the affair was called pusillanimous, and commented strongly on by the country papers. When it was all over, Trevellian wished that he had taken farmer Garraway's advice and let the matter drop into deserved oblivion: for he occasionally overheard remarks which were anything but complimentary to him, and they stung him like so many gad-flies.

When this affair was over, he walked to the farm to have the interview with Chérie St. Ange which he had promised himself. When he arrived, Chérie was standing in the porch in the act of fastening-up some white and red roses which grew together, and which had become disarranged by a wind which blew during the night. She wore a light cotton frock, and had a colour as red as the roses she was twining around the fretted woodwork of the porch.

Trevellian accosted her with a smile, in return for which she handed him a flower, which he placed in his button-hole, and complimented her upon the freshness

of her appearance, comparing her to Aurora, queen of the morning.

Presently the colour faded from Chérie's cheeks; she heard a step within, which she knew to be the farmer's. In another moment he was before them.

"My dear," said farmer Garraway, and his voice was mild and gentle, as if he did not mean to chide her, "go into the house; Amanda wants you." Having said this, he waited until she walked through the porch, not with her head bowed down like a guilty thing, but with the deep blushes which attend sweet confusion. Then he confronted the young man, exclaiming, "Mr. Trevellian, may I request the favour of a few minutes' conversation with you. Not here, if you please; we will go a little a-field, as what I have to say is intended for no ears but yours."

"Yes, I will go with you, though I do not know why you should look so grave this fine day," replied Geoffray Trevellian with a smile, endeavouring to assume an air of unconcern, in which he failed miserably.

Farmer Thomas Garraway, who was as fine a specimen of an honest, upright English yeoman as you could wish to meet with in a day's march, led the way to the end of the garden, and standing by the gate, continued—"No farther; this will do. Now, sir, I will tell you why I am so serious this fine morning. Miss St. Ange is an inmate of my household; she, in fact, is my daughters' companion, instructress, and friend, and while she remains with me I stand in the relation of a father to her. Your visits here are dangerous; and I am going to use strong language now, sir. I am going to say, that the man who would steal the love of that poor

girl is a villain, unfit to cumber the face of this fair earth."

"I won't contradict you. Go on, Garraway. Let me hear as soon as convenient what you are coming to," responded the young man with the same sickly smile. "If you want any one had up, I am not in the commission of the peace; but I will mention the matter to my uncle, who is, and I have no doubt, if your application is backed by me, you will get a warrant or a summons, whichever it is you require."

"I am thankful that I want neither one nor the other," said the farmer. "All I have to ask is, that you will be good enough to discontinue your visits to my house. When we last met we parted in anger, and your threats and defiance are still ringing in my ears. I have heard of your character. Why are you here? You do not seek me. Your uncle conducts his affairs through an agent, therefore you can have no business with me; and as we are not on friendly terms, you cannot come hither through a wish for my company, which would not be, under any circumstances, particularly entertaining to a young gentleman in your position."

"I tell you frankly, that I come here because I like—" began Trevellian. He stopped suddenly, for a menacing gleam in the old man's eye warned him not to proceed. He was about to say, "Because I like Miss St. Ange;" but the obvious inconvenience of the questions which would be put to him at once suggested itself, and he thought it prudent not to provoke the hostility of the farmer by avowing an affection for Chérie, which would oblige him to explain the relations formerly existing between them; and he did not care about taking Garraway into his confidence.

“Go on, sir,” said the farmer, whose face went very pale; “or shall I say that your cowardly heart dare not? You come here to steal the love of that girl—a silly creature, who, I believe, has no more knowledge of the world than she has of men’s villany. Don’t deny it. If you dare to tell me a lie to my face, old as I am, I’ll strike you.”

Geoffray stepped back, as if to get out of danger, for there was that in the farmer’s manner which told him, plainer than the most forcible language, that he would keep his word. He knew he was in the wrong, and felt more inclined to pacify than irritate him—saying a few words with this end in view; but the farmer waved his hand, as if to bid him keep silence, and went on: “Be advised by me, Mr. Trevellian, and keep away from this house. I want nothing from you, and there is no earthly reason why we should come in contact. The peace of this valley, which has been a happy one, will be disturbed by you at your peril; and if I find you prowling about here again, my men will have orders from me to drub you soundly, and drag you through the horsepond. That’s plain English, and if you can’t understand it I shall be sorry for you.”

This was more than Trevellian could bear without retorting, and considering the excitable temperament of the young man, it is scarcely surprising that he made answer in the same strain in which he was addressed. He told Garraway that whether his suspicions were just or unjust, he could not permit him the license he had used.

“You must be shown,” he concluded, “that if you occupy the land, you are not the master here. It is an honour for me to speak to any member of your family; and if I have, as you say—which I by no means admit—

paid attention to any one in your house, she, as well as yourself, ought to feel flattered at my notice. The next time we meet," he added, cutting short the farmer's scornful laugh, "you will seek me to beg indulgence at my hands, and I shall show you no mercy."

He was turning on his heel with a haughty air, when a footstep was heard outside the gate, and in an instant a voice which he recognised as his uncle's, said in a tone of ill-suppressed passion, "You are here, Geoffray, and I was informed you would be ; and now that I have what is to me proof positive of your infatuation, I can say what has been lurking in my mind for some time past. But what is the matter? you look perturbed."

"Not more than I feel," replied Trevellian. "I seem to meet with nothing but annoyances this morning. Why do you follow me about? Am I not old enough to be the master of my own actions?"

"Certainly not, when you are likely to become the prey of a designing family. It is useless to disguise what I have heard," exclaimed Mr. George Trevellian, "and it is as well perhaps that I should speak before Mr. Garraway, as he is as much concerned in what I am going to say as you are yourself. You come here, encouraged by him, to make love to some girl, and I don't wish my name to be disgraced and tarnished by the sort of plebeian alliance into which there is an infamous conspiracy to drag you."

"This is unjust, sir," cried the farmer promptly. "Hear my defence before you condemn me; for, whoever your informant is, he has misled you. So far from wishing to have Mr. Trevellian here for a son-in-law, I have just warned him off the premises. I don't believe he means to deal fairly with any girl; and even if he did,

he should never have her with my consent, for I don't like his character well enough. His reputation has gone before him, and I'll have none of him."

"I don't believe a word you say," said Mr. George Trevellian; "and if you were to talk till to-morrow morning you would not convince me that I am wrong. My nephew's silence is sufficient confirmation of the view I take. If you were telling me the truth, he would corroborate you. It is extraordinary to me that you should forget your position, as you have done. You are simply a tenant at will; and as I do not intend to have people of your designing disposition on my estate, I shall give my solicitor orders to serve you with a notice of ejectment at Lady-day."

This declaration was so unsuspected that farmer Thomas Garraway was completely stunned by the calamity which threatened to overtake him. To leave Wood-House farm would be ruin to him; and heaving a deep sigh he sank against the trunk of a tree for support, while he looked almost imploringly at Geoffray Trevellian, who, with a stony countenance, for a time remained obstinately silent.

At length he spoke, and said, "The fact is, uncle, I have accidentally met here a young lady with whom I was acquainted in town. She is, without knowing it, an heiress; but that has nothing to do with my fondness for her. She is an orphan, and left my friend Major Wilton, with whose family she was living, through some slight misunderstanding. It is quite a romantic story. I was delighted to meet her again, and we should now have been engaged in amicable conversation, if this good man had not interfered."

"That alters the case," replied his uncle; adding,

"Mr. Garraway, I retract what I have said. Be pleased to drive this young lady to Binnethorpe Hall as soon as it may be agreeable to her to come. My nephew and I will return on foot."

"Certainly, sir. If Miss St. Ange is willing to go to your house. I will drive her over."

Mr. George Trevellian nodded, and linking his arm in that of his nephew, they walked away together. During the walk Geoffray told his uncle that since Miss St. Ange's flight from Major Wilton's at Teddington, a lawyer's clerk had informed him that she was entitled to three thousand a-year under her father's will, which he had found. On seeing there was money in the case, his uncle approved strongly of his making himself agreeable to her, and apologised for his observations when at the farm.

Chérie St. Ange came over in the afternoon, very nicely dressed, looking ladylike and charming, as she always did. She was anxious to see Trevellian, not because she liked him, but she hoped to get some news of Lord Bracken from him. Since her flight she had fancied she might have been mistaken, but she had kept the cruel letter, and that seemed conclusive. In addition to this reason for wishing to meet Geoffray, she wanted to ask him to keep her place of refuge a secret from the Teddington people.

Mr. George Trevellian was busily engaged in his study writing some letters, when Chérie called, and she was shown into the handsomely-furnished drawing-room of Binnethorpe Hall, where Geoffray was anxiously awaiting her coming. He was very gracious to her, being particularly anxious to make a favourable impression upon her. If he could induce her to marry him, he

could go back to London the husband of a rich woman, keep his engagement with Golfer, and laugh at the War-office, which he could afford to throw up; for his pride did not at all stand in the way of his living upon his wife's fortune.

"This is kind of you!" he exclaimed.

"You are an old friend, and it is well that we should meet, Mr. Trevellian," she replied.

"I hope," he exclaimed bluntly, "that you have by this time got over your fleeting fondness for Lord Bracken."

"He is unworthy of my consideration; and yet, if you knew all—"

She paused abruptly.

"I do know more perhaps than you think," he answered. "The letter he sent you he has openly boasted of."

"To you?"

"Yes, and to others."

This was a death-blow to all her hopes; this was a sad confirmation of all her suspicions; and overcome by the painful revelation, she sank on her knees before a chair, and buried her face in her hands. Trevellian stood with his back against the mantelpiece, and gazed at her unconcernedly.

Her grief did not last long. Recovering herself, she rose and sat down, saying, while her tears still fell, "Do not laugh at me for my weakness, Mr. Trevellian; you do not know on what terms Lord Bracken and I were. He led me to expect that, that—"

"That he would make you his wife."

"Yes."

"Ah! If you were as well acquainted with him as I

am, you would not be surprised at his throwing you over," answered Trevellian. "If I were you, I should forget, and treat him with the contempt he deserves. There are others who would make you amends for his cruel behaviour. I must speak more plainly, my dear Miss St. Ange; this is an opportunity I have been waiting for. I—I—why need I make any secret of an honest attachment?—I have long loved you. Do you think you could in time return my affection?"

Chérie shook her head sadly, and a melancholy smile crossed her pretty face.

"No," she replied flatly. "It is useless for me to deceive you: my heart is too deeply wounded ever to allow me to form another attachment."

Trevellian bit his lip. This rejection of his advances was not what he had expected.

"I did not anticipate this, Mr. Trevellian," she said after a pause, "or I would have spared you and myself the pain of this interview. My object in coming here was to ask you to not communicate my present address to Major Wilton."

"And why not, pray?" he said coldly.

"Because he would exert all his influence over me to return to his house. He was my father's friend, and I do not well know how I could refuse him. The associations connected with the Major's house are of such a nature that I do not wish to be reminded of them; you must see that."

"I think it will be my duty to write to your friends, Miss St. Ange," Trevellian replied.

"If you do that, you will drive me to desperation," she exclaimed wildly. "I fancied I was secure in this country place; though I did not dare to think of my

future. O, it is dreadful to be situated as I am—no father, no mother, to advise me!”

“I would be both to you,” he answered tenderly; “I would be more—a husband.”

Drawing herself up with dignity, she said: “I have already intimated to you that such a relation between us is impossible. You have not treated me in a gentlemanly way, Mr. Trevellian; and I shall wish you good-bye.”

He endeavoured to detain her; but she swept past him, and was quickly in the open air, and took her seat by the side of the farmer, who was awaiting her.

“The devil take the women!” muttered Trevellian angrily; “I never did know how to manage them.”

CHAPTER XIV.

DO, PLEASE, PET ME.

CHERIE ST. ANGE made short answers to all farmer Garraway's questions; and seeing that she was in an uncommunicative mood, he did not press her.

She was thinking what she should do for the best. All the long night she thought, for her mind was too much burdened for rest, and towards morning she determined to quit Woodhouse farm, go to the governesses' institution in London, and look out for a new situation. The farmer's house was no longer a place of security for her, since Geoffray Trevellian had discovered her, and she feared that he would persecute her with his advances, as well as send Major Wilton to her.

All at the farm were grieved to hear that she was

going to leave them on the following day : and Garraway told her always to make his house her home, should she be in want of an asylum at any time.

With tears in her eyes she quitted her friends, and was driven to the railway station, which she reached just as the train was starting for London. The farmer hastily opened the door of a first-class carriage, handed her in, and wished her good-bye, when the engine whistled, and the train moved slowly away. Suddenly a voice exclaimed, "Chérie!"

She looked round and trembled, for well she knew that voice. It was Lord Bracken's. They were alone together. Trying to be brave and stern, Chérie said, "My lord, I—" But she could get no further; her fortitude gave way, and leaning back against the cushions she wept bitterly.

"My dear child," cried his lordship, coming close to her, while his voice melted with tenderness, "this is indeed fortunate. I can now say what I have been longing to say to you for months past. How lucky that I should have been spending a few days in the country! The wretched mistake, which has, I fear, caused you so much misery, as well as myself, can now be explained."

"A mistake?" she murmured.

"Yes; the letter you received was intended for Miss Arden; but by a stupid blunder I put the letters in the wrong envelopes. It is you I love, and always did and always will love. It is my dearest wish to make you my wife, and I wrote to tell you so. O Chérie, why did you go away, and make my heart almost break?"

She was silent for a time; then, leaning upon his shoulder, she said, "O, do, please, pet me. I am so happy now."

And he put his arm round her waist, and looked lovingly into her pretty face, and whispered tender affectionate things to her, which made her little heart leap in her bosom with a wild and unwonted joy. The mistake was cleared up at last, and the dark clouds had lifted.

The remainder of the journey to London was passed pleasantly enough now ; mutual explanations ensued ; and Chérie St. Ange was escorted in triumph to Major Wilton's by Lord Bracken, who introduced her to her wondering friends as his future wife.

The same evening, Mr. James Golfer sought his lordship, and stating the facts he had mentioned to Trevellian, made a similar bargain, the consequence of which was, that in a few days the will was produced, and Chérie St. Ange's uncle compelled to give up the money he had so long enjoyed, but which her father had intended for his child.

Golfer started in trade with the money he obtained, and became a bill-discounter, by which means he soon grew rich ; until one day a panic occurred in the City, and he lost all he possessed in the world, which compelled him to go back to his desk in Peddie and Lever's office, where he now drives a quill as of old.

Tibby, the impulsive daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arden, was as difficult to manage as ever. The mistake which Lord Bracken had made delighted her, while it mortified and annoyed her friends beyond measure. It gave her a chance of marrying young Fulling, her father's partner's son, whom she loved with all the fervour of her generous and impulsive nature. But Mrs. Arden selected a new suitor for her hand, a Mr. Baylis, who was very rich, and really loved her. He was a

middle-aged man, and had been on 'Change, making his fortune in lucky speculations. Tibby longed for the time when she would be of age: she called it the period of her emancipation, and vowed that then nothing should prevent her from marrying Mr. Fulling. Her invariable answer to her mother's repeated solicitations was,

"I suppose I must hold my tongue, and be an obedient child, until my emancipation takes place. Thank goodness, it is not long distant!" A deep sigh would follow this outburst.

"I must get your father to speak to you," her mother said on one occasion, "as it seems that my remonstrances have no effect whatever upon you. We have spoilt you. I often urged upon Mr. Arden the necessity of a little more severity; but the poor man doted upon you when you were young, and I let him have his own way, unfortunately. You seem to forget one thing, though, as you are sitting there before the fire with your old dress on, and your hair in a wretchedly untidy state."

"What is that?" inquired Tibby, with a yawn.

"Mr. Nelson Baylis is coming to-night. I wrote and invited him to drop in, as we should be glad to see him."

"In that case, my dear mamma," replied Tibby, "I shall take an early opportunity of going up-stairs, and I shall stay there all the evening, as I do not feel in the humour to entertain your model husband. How long, pray, does he intend to stay?"

"How can I tell? How long do people generally stay when they are invited anywhere to spend the evening?" said Mrs. Arden, across whose face a shade of vexation stole.

"Please make some excuse for me. Say I am un-

well, or have gone to the theatre. I will have a fire lighted in my bedroom, and with a new novel I think I can while away the evening more pleasantly than I could in Mr. Baylis's company."

"My dear," exclaimed Mrs. Arden sternly, "while you are with me, and under my charge, I will exact that obedience which every daughter owes to a mother. I have all my life been too weak and indulgent to you. It is, perhaps, not too late to turn over a new leaf. You go to church, you say your prayers, and are, I believe, at heart a good, religious girl. Now I command you to obey me—your mother—and to receive this man this evening; and further, to make yourself agreeable to him."

"O, very well!" answered Tibby, whose eyes flashed. "If you want to make me a hypocrite, the fault must rest with you. I will flirt desperately with Mr. Baylis, and send him away with the belief that I am head and ears in love with him, as you are good enough to say he is with me."

"That would be rushing into the other extreme. Preserve the golden mean."

"I cannot. I must be one thing or the other," answered the amiable Tibby, leaving the room to make her toilette.

She was dreadfully untidy, as her mother had alleged, and had no idea of method. Her wardrobe was under the charge of a maid; if it had not been, she would never have known where to find anything. She would throw things of all kinds into corners, and tumble drawers full of clothes about in such a way as to disarrange all their contents. When she expected no one, she would sit with her hair unbrushed, her chignon

awry, and her face and hands no cleaner than a hasty sponge in the morning could make them; but her love of admiration would induce her to adorn herself to the best advantage when visitors were looked for.

Nelson Baylis was a tall handsome man of five-and-forty. He had known Tibby for some months.

His love for her was one of those unaccountable passions which it is difficult to understand. He was a clever, and had been a hard-working, fellow. She was a fine, showy, giddy girl. He did not love her for her father's money. His own wealthy position placed him far above any consideration of a mercenary nature, and he would have loved her just as dearly and as hopelessly if her people had been without a penny.

Many a fine fellow has ere now loved a woman utterly unworthy of his honest affection, and loved in a passionate, whole-hearted manner, the earnestness of which has only ceased with his life.

In spite of her promise to be fascinating, and flirt desperately with Mr. Baylis, Tibby sat in a sort of sullen state during the time he remained, seldom joining in the conversation, and answering "yes" or "no" when spoken to.

Baylis had never dared to tell the haughty and indifferent beauty his love; but he had made a confidante of her mother, and it was something to him to know that he had her as an advocate and well-wisher.

At ten o'clock he rose to go, and Tibby's face was instantly lighted up with satisfaction. She held out the tips of her fingers for him to touch, and with a half-yawn, which was very rude, but which she did not attempt to suppress, she wished him good-night.

He went with a heavy heart, and she retired once

more to her bedchamber, to read a scented three-cornered note which her maid had been asked by young Fulling to give her.

It was not written in an extravagant vein. The writer simply told her that, as he could know little peace when separated from her, he was willing to offer his hand, and to lay his slender fortune, such as it was (a hundred a-year left him by an aunt), at her feet. If she complied with his request, that she would be happier than she then was, and he would endeavour to repay her with the devotion of a life.

She treasured this letter up, and jealously guarded it from her mother. In three days she replied, saying that the writer might hope, but she could take no decided step hastily. She added that she should have no objection to meet Fulling clandestinely, as her father had lately forbidden him the house; but that she could not ask him to come to Teddington, as Mrs. Arden objected to him, and his presence would only be productive of unpleasantness.

Then began a career of deception.

She met Fulling at various places, and listened to the love he poured into her ears. She liked to hear that she was the most beautiful woman in the world, and possessed of more accomplishments and graces than were yet centred in one daughter of Eve.

Mrs. Arden found a bundle of letters from Fulling, which Tibby had treasured up in a drawer; and thinking herself privileged to read them, she did so, thus gaining an insight into what was going on.

She remonstrated with her daughter, but without avail. She did more; she incited Nelson Baylis to make her an offer of marriage, which he did. He had

the mortification, however, to be rejected. Tibby told him plainly that she could respect him as a friend, if he would not ask her to love him; but that if he persisted in his attentions, which were the reverse of agreeable, she should not continue to regard him even from a friendly point of view.

He went away with despair in his heart. Still he loved her. It was a religion with him to love this woman, and he was a devotee. That is to say, for a month; at the end of which time Tibby ran away with young Fulling, and got married to him in London. This event made the stockbroker turn his affectionate regards in another direction.

Mr. and Mrs. Arden were obliged to forgive the impulsive Tibby, who has settled down to double harness, and takes very kindly to her first baby, a fat chubby-faced boy, who is as like his father as one pea is to another.

Mr. and Mrs. Fulling are on terms of great intimacy with Lord and Lady Bracken, and live near them in Belgravia. Chérie and her husband had gone to town after their marriage; and large sums of money were spent by Lord Bracken in redecorating his town-house, which was situated in Eaton-square; and plenty of work was given to the best milliner at the West-end, who had to supply her ladyship with the newest fashions, for she well knew the charm that a well-dressed woman exercises over all with whom she comes in contact.

The season was a very brilliant one. Parliament met early. The court set the example of extravagance and display in giving costly parties, balls, and dinners; and the aristocracy—the richest in the world—emulated the example thus set, with a recklessness of expenditure which diminished many a rent-roll, but added to the

splendid gaiety of "the season," and sent their names, trumpeted on the tongue of Fame, to the uttermost limits of the domain of fashion. Among these Lord and Lady Bracken were distinguished. The occasion was a grand one, that of the introduction of his dearly-loved wife to society; and he spared no expense, for it was his dearest wish to show the world that he had been superior to the aristocratic prejudice which makes those in the highest ranks look for husbands and wives in their own sphere, who can number on their coats-of-arms as many quarterings as themselves.

Geoffray Trevellian stayed at Binnethorpe for a few months, at the end of which time his uncle was taken seriously ill and died, leaving him a sum of money which, after paying all his debts, brought him in three hundred a-year. He is a man about town, awfully in debt; unmarried, but believed to be looking out for a woman with money, though he does not seem very near the chance. He occasionally meets Lord and Lady Bracken, who are good enough to ask him to dinner; but neither of them know how he plotted with Mr. James Golfer, the lawyer's clerk, to obtain possession of Chérie St. Ange's hand and her hidden fortune at one and the same time. That is his secret, and he broods over it sometimes when he gets into the middle of his second pipe.

THE END.

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